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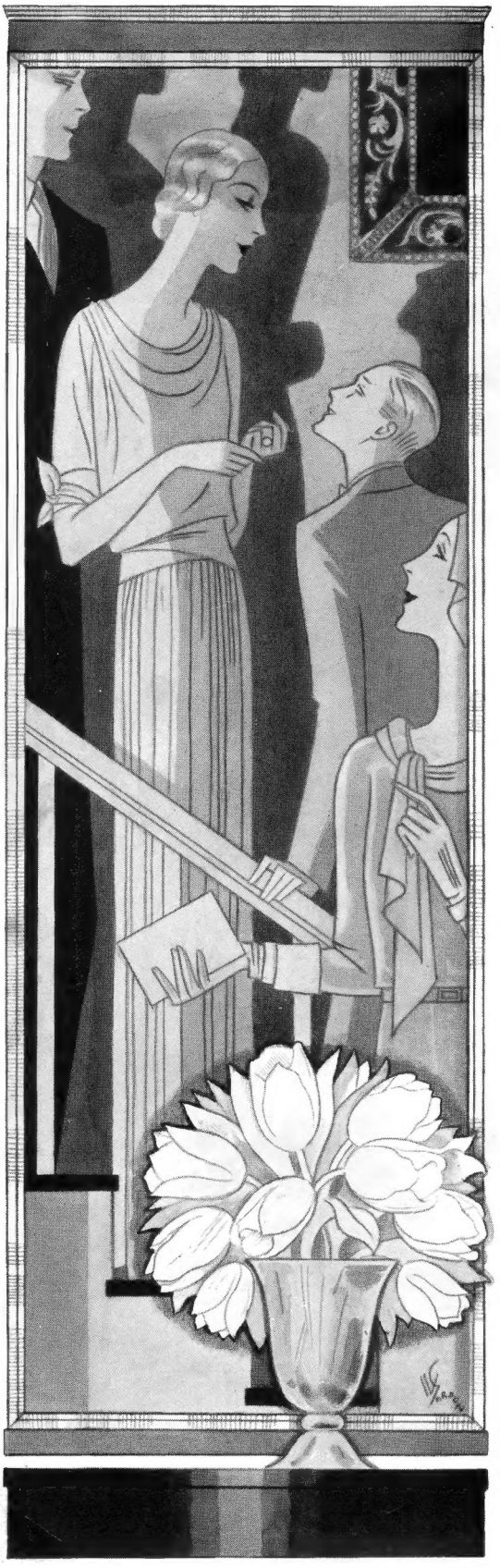

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A Novelette of Abyssinia

By GORDON MacCREAGH

KING sat, an immobile blackness in the shadows overhanging the steep bank of red clay that marked the Sobat River ford. A faint luminosity diagonally below him between the massed darknesses of foliage showed where the clay bank cropped out again on the farther shore between the low tumbled shale cliffs that pinched the river down to a treacherous brown channel for many twisted miles in either direction.

At the foot of the clay slide the long, dim form of a dugout canoe weaved and tugged against the pale reflections of the current. For now there was no ford. The rainy season had just come to an end and the river was reveling in its scanty four months of usefulness that justified the marking of a little blue anchor on the map as the head of navigation at Dawesh, ten miles above the ford.

Navigation meant that during the four months of "high water" a quite crazy sternwheel steamer could dodge the rocks all the way from Taufikia, on the upper Nile, to deliver small assortments of brummagem hardware and Lancashire piece goods among the mud villages of the Sobat Pibor province of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, and unload its final cargo of enamel cook pots at Dawesh, where it would take on goat skin sacks full of wild coffee that came down by mule caravan from the Kaffa highlands of Abyssinia.

This month the steamer was only three days late—that was why it was risking the tricky run by night. King could hear the panting labor of its engines that echoed from several bends downriver, criss-crossing up the tunnel of tumbled rock and giant fig trees. Only the glow from his pipe bowl threw into intermittent relief the hard angles of his

UNPROFITABLE IVORY

cheek bones and the straight brows that hung over narrowed eyes in a permanent frown born of long gazing over wide spaces of hot sun and shimmering veld.

The pipe glowed and waned in slow steady puffs. King was not interested in the river boat. He was just enjoying the night while he waited for daylight before attempting to use that dugout canoe. The steamer labored round the nearer bend. Of a sudden, as though a door had been opened, all its confusion of noises surged up to desecrate the quiet of the river.

Voices dominated; and immediately it was evident that the reason for that was an altercation of some sort. The glow from King's pipe brightened almost to a lengthy glare. The level brows lifted once; the eyes changed from somber thoughtfulness to alert interest, and swung downstream. Otherwise he remained as before, a motionless shadow among the shadows, long, sinewy arms hugging muscular knees.

A voice floated from the boat.

"You'll have to lock him up and take him back."

It was a loud voice, dominant, authoritative. Clearly the voice of a man who was accustomed to giving orders and being quickly obeyed by underlings afraid for their jobs. Instinctively King did not like it. He was one of those who felt that the proper sort of man could control his underlings without the arrogant superiority which that voice spread all over the quiet river.

The boat was near enough to distinguish dim figures grouped under the feeble oil lamps of the after cabin deck—no electric lights on this little wood burning river tramp.

Another voice, lower pitched, self-contained, seemed to be expostulating with the loud one. A coarser, less cultured voice; it might have been some officer of the little tramp. Only oddments and snatches of words came across.

"Why—er—Mr. Fanshawe—sort of difficult just what to do with him—"

The big, authoritative voice cut in with angry impatience.

"I insist, Captain, that you take him into custody. Otherwise I shall report it to your agents as a breach of duty. The fellow admits that he is an American and I am positive that he is spying on—"

The big voice checked itself—it had almost said something. But the captain, faced with the threat of authoritative complaint lodged at the home office, was ready to acquiesce in what seemed to him to be a harsh and not very necessary action.

NONE of this had anything to do with the silent watcher on the bank. But all of King's sympathy went out to the underdog, whoever he might be, whatever his offense. It could not be anything so very frightful if the captain was willing to be lenient.

King shrugged and relighted his pipe, which had gone out during the watching of these doings on a ship that passed in the night. The long flare of the match lighted up the brows frowning low in disgust. What a lot of unnecessarily unpleasant people there were in the world. How well he knew that loud, overbearing type. He had had his own dealings with them many a time and his gorge rose anew at their arrogance. But that captain seemed to be a decent fellow. Pity that the other fellow dominated him so easily.

The boat was just about opposite now. The captain was speaking.

"Very well, Mr. Fanshawe, if you put it that way—"

A flurry of forms broke up the dim group. Cries—a scuffle. Somebody fell. A dark form sprang quickly to the rail and threw itself over. A splash. The rest hurried to the rail to peer into the dark water. It was all over in a second. Then the bull voice, furious, roaring, throwing orders in all directions.

"After him! He must be caught! Stop the boat, Captain! I'm positive now he's spying—"

Confusion. Jangling of bells. Snorting of engines. Shouts.

King took his pipe from his mouth. Without turning his head he called softly—

"Kaffa."

Immediately a small shadow—it might almost have been an ape—took form out of the darkness behind him and scuttled to his side.

"Choose quickly two good trackers and put them to follow where that swimmer goes. He must not be lost."

"*Nidio, bwana.* Is he to be caught and brought in?"

"You think too fast, little monkey man," said King evenly. "The order was only that he be followed."

"It is an order, *bwana.*"

The little shape faded back into the darkness. King hugged his knees and smoked.

The boat's engines snorted hugely. Water churned in yellow foam at the stern wheel. Men ran about the deck. The boat's way stopped. It dropped back. The wheel churned furiously. The boat crept forward again.

It was quite a maneuver to push that boat's nose into the dark clay bank. A

maneuver of a good ten minutes. A lantern arrived at the bow. Orders flew. A gangplank began to be pushed out to the bank.

King moved at last. He knocked out his pipe and put it back between his teeth. Then he lifted his sinewy length to his feet. An instant shadow bulked behind him. Tall and broad; taller even than King. A pale glimmer of light reflected from a great, two-foot blade of a spear.

"*Umbo, umbo,*" growled King. "Not this time, Barounggo. There is no call here for spear work, thou great slaughterer."

That shadow, like the first little one, melted back into the night.

With a great scuffling and much admonishment to be careful, men straggled across the teetering gangplank. Natives, by their voices; though an excited cockney voice directed them while the big bull voice from the higher rail of the deck shouted orders to hurry.

King — quite needlessly — placed a lighted match to his empty pipe. Men swarmed up the bank to him. King put his pipe into his pocket. Hands pawed at him. In various lower Sudanese dialects they announced their triumphant capture.

"Bring 'im dahn 'ere," yelped the cockney voice.

King suffered himself to be pushed, dragged, hustled down the bank. At the foot of the gangplank he stopped and braced himself.

"I guess this is as far as I'm going," he said coolly.

"Bring 'im along, ye black swabs," shouted the cockney.

THE BLACK men hesitated. The lower Sudanese, perhaps more than any other African, takes a sneaking delight in offering indignity to a white man, if he but dares. Backed by another white man's orders, this gang of roustabouts was encouraged almost to the point of violence. It was only the cold confidence of this long and hard white man that held them.

The cockney was, by the nature of his job, accustomed to handling men and he had plenty of courage.

"Wot the blinkin' 'ell!" he shouted; and with long, ungainly, but expert hops he traversed the teetering gangplank and charged on King, lashing out fast with fists less expert than his feet.

Big, hard hands smothered his. Harder elbows blocked his wild swings. His own elbows were pinned to his sides in an unbreakable clinch. A cool voice said:

"Easy, feller, easy. Who you aiming to tangle up?"

The cockney gasped. This accent was the same; the language was the same; but the easy power of the dim figure that held him helpless was astonishingly different from the man who had jumped from the penalty that the big bull voice demanded. Enough light came from the boat to enable the cockney to peer up at the face that loomed close over his own.

"Blimey!" His hands dropped passive with his shout. "Wot the 'ell! 'Ere, we've copped the wrong bloke."

"What's that? What do you say?" roared the bull voice. "Bring him on board."

King stepped back and shook his head, grinning.

"No siree; I'm not stepping on to your boat just now."

"What the devil is happening down there?" shouted the bull voice. "Who is the fellow? Bring him on board, I tell you."

The cockney looked at King. King grinned at the cockney, head tilted amusedly to one side, legs spread wide, hands deep in khaki breeches pockets. The cockney turned.

"I dunno 'oo 'e is, sir; but—'scuse me, sir—'e ain't the kind you just brings aboard."

"Damnation! Is there never anybody who can do anything? Must I— Here, Captain, bring a light. I suppose I must get him myself. Come along now."

Commotion and scurrying followed. A

lantern traversed the deck and came down a companionway to work its way forward, over and around bales and crates of lower deckload.

"Who's all the noise?" King asked quietly of the cockney. He held no ill will against this man.

The answer came in a low voice, apprehensive of even discussing the great man.

"'Im? Why 'e's Mr. Fanshawe. 'E's a big gun, 'e is."

"Huh. Sure goes off like one," grunted King. "But who'n hell is Mr. Fanshawe?"

The lantern was already bobbing along the gang plank. A large figure loomed behind the man who carried it. He strode confidently up to King.

"Let me have a look at the man, Captain."

The lantern lifted and King saw a face that fitted exactly with his conception of that voice. Large, full, strong eyebrows and mouth, a large nose thick at the root, heavy jowled. The face of a man of affairs; forceful, with the confidence born of success—a success due to the will ruthlessly to drive well chosen subordinates.

The man saw King's face, sun burned, hard angled, wary eyed, with the faintest suspicion of a sardonic smile set on a tight lipped mouth. The torrent of ready speech checked for a moment in the man's throat—he was changing his mind about what he had been all set to say.

"Now then, my man, who are you and what are you doing here?"

It was quite a lame beginning after the kind of talk that had preceded it. But then, the man had not expected to see that kind of face.

King's antipathy had set in against this man; against his whole type. He was not inclined to turn a soft answer to wrath. His Western drawl was exaggerated.

"Jest settin' here, when your gorillas horned in on the landscape an' jumped me."

Something about the accent infuriated the big man.

"Well, what were you doing? Don't quibble now. How do you happen to be just here?"

King teetered on his toes and heels and stuck his thumbs into his belt.

"Free country around here, I guess."

Suddenly the man shouted:

"I know. I've got it. You're another of those interfering Americans. I see it now. I saw you signal to him just before he jumped. I saw you strike a light; and then he went over. You're a confederate of his. By heaven, I'll have you—"

King's head was one side and he nodded judicially, like one weighing an offer; amiably, as though disposed to accept the offer. His grin was wide and engaging.

"Yes, mister? You'll do what? I'm all set an' waitin'. Shoot."

THE GRIN was full of good humor, inviting. But there was a certain cold gleam in those narrowed gray eyes that carried a suggestion that the invitation was for the other to start something. The strong man of affairs received a forceful impression that this very hard looking person didn't like him, and particularly that he was not at all cowed by the strong personality that was good at controlling subordinates. The longer he looked, the less inclined he felt to say anything that might start something.

King waited, almost regretfully. After the awkward silence he said—

"Shucks, I guess maybe you meant you were going to bulldoze the captain into taking me into custody for something or other."

But that made an opening out of the situation. The big man turned on the captain with an irascibility calculated to cover up his relief.

"What the devil are you all standing round like bally images for? Get your men out with lanterns at once and scour the bush for that other rotter. He can't have gone far. We've got something on him that we can hold him for."

The captain obediently shouted orders back to his boat. But King interposed.

"Wait a minute. Easy awhile." His

unhurried confidence halted proceedings. "Now supposing you should catch this bird—which I kinda think you won't—but supposing you should, just what do you aim to do? This fellow's an American citizen, I judge from some of your complimentary talk."

"Yes he is, damn him," the big man flared. "But he's not in his own country now, and he can't do what—"

"I don't care what he has done," King broke in. "But I'll tell you exactly what you'll do. You're good an' right, he's not in his own country. But—" King grinned— "neither is he in yours, big feller. Nor is he on your British ship—I don't know just how the law stands on that. But right now he's in Abyssinia: and stick that in your pipe awhile. The skipper knows; you came over the border fifteen miles downriver. So listen in while I tell you just what you can do.

"You'll lodge your charge, whatever it is, through your consul, to the nearest Abyssinian police authority. That'll be at Dawesh. The Abyssinian police will catch him—if they can—and they'll hold him on your complaint." King's voice was full of unction. "Your police at Bahr-Yezdi in your province of Sobat Pibor will make application to the Abyssinian government for his deportation. The Abyssinian government will obtain the concurrence of the American minister at Addis Abeba, which is about four weeks' mail from here; it will then furnish authority, by mail, to your police at Bahr-Yezdi. Then they can come and fetch him. Guess you'll have your man—allowing for routine and official pow-wow—in about three months from now. And the reason I know is 'cause some one tried to pull it on me once."

King rocked on his heels and grinned benignly at the nonplused group. The big man alone had any decision. He was unaccustomed to being thwarted, and this insolent fellow had twice foiled him. He flared into swift anger.

"I'll be damned if I let this fellow dictate to me. There's no silly Abyssinian policeman here. Get your man out after that other fellow, Captain. And we'll take this one along too. Let him talk law to his consul. That will hold him from sticking his nose into my business for a time. I'll take care of the responsibility. Get him, Captain. Here you, coolies— *Sharoof*. Catch him."

Africans are quick to recognize authority. During the few days' run upriver they had observed this man; they knew that he was a very important personage indeed. It was the encouragement they needed. Yelling, as Africans must, they rushed toward King and he disappeared in a dim pyramid of clawing hands and straining bodies from which issued grunts, howls, and the rank, goaty odor of sweating natives.

The white men held off. The big man, as a Cæsar might have done, giving terse orders to underlings; the captain, because the dignity of his position forbade any mixing into a scramble with some unknown on a dark river bank; the cockney—mate, or whatever he was—because he had received no direct order and because, being a man of his hands himself, he appreciated the hardy nonchalance of this stranger who baited arrogant authority so carelessly.

King did not know how many unclean paws clawed at him. He was submerged in a wave of shouting black men. It was an indignity which no white man in a black country can permit, and which no proper white man would condone. He fought viciously. Rough and tumble was an art in which he had a considerable and hard experience. On the other hand, the African, weaponless, is a rather ineffectual person.

KING felt a big fellow in front of him who held one of his hands in both of his and tried to twist the wrist over. Somehow the other hand was for the moment free. The wrist twister did not know till long after what sudden cataclysm had caused the firmament to explode into stars about his head. An ill smelling arm reached over King's shoulder and wound

itself round his throat. He dragged it down and got the full heave of his shoulder under the armpit. That one cartwheeled out of the mob and arrived in the dark water with a splash. Other hands clutched at him. He ducked, twisted, struck.

One cunning paw from behind devoted all its efforts to trying to dig its fingers in between King's lower ribs in that excruciating, tearing hold. King kicked upward with his heel. That one fell off, howling.

Knees, elbows, fists; everything that King had he used. His own grunts of effort were drowned in the yelps and screeches that they evoked. Presently only four dim figures pawed at him. A hard fist, cracking like bone upon bone, downed one. The others stood off, shouting still, egging one another on to go in once more. But that was all the courage that was left in them.

King stood, breathing deeply. The yammering of the natives died to frightened clucks. The white men faced each other. King was full of truculence. The exhilaration of fight overcame all caution. He jeered his scorn of the three.

"I suppose people who'll set their niggers on to a white man will all jump him at once. All right—I'm waiting."

But it was to the credit of the others that they came of a race that did not ordinarily fight in gangs against a lone opponent. The big man thrust forward. He had courage enough, though personal fisticuffs were still far from his lofty thought.

"Who the devil are you, to talk that way to me? What do you mean by it?"

"Name's King. And I mean just what I say about any white man who'll set his niggers on to another white man in Africa."

The big man was quite unable to understand the enormity of his crime. He was too unfamiliar with the situation of the white man in a black man's country. What his next move might have been remained unknown; for the cockney gave vent to a sudden yelp.

"Crickey! Not— Lumme, 'e must be that Kingi *bwana* bloke. 'Ere, Capting, sir."

He whispered excitedly with the captain. The latter drew the fuming great man aside and talked earnestly with him. All three looked around as though expecting they did not know what force to be lurking in the shadows. The cockney pointed suddenly.

On the brow of the clay bank, a black silhouette against the pale sky, stood a great naked shape leaning motionless upon a huge spear. Only the fringes of monkey hair garters at elbow and knee fluttered in the thin, downriver wind and a single tall ostrich plume swayed and nodded in ominous beckoning.

The Sudanese deckhands chattered quick noises to one another and clustered at the gangplank. The white men had no means of knowing what might be behind that looming shape.

The forceful man who dominated his several hundred subordinates in his perfectly organized offices back in civilization somewhere, felt suddenly that he lacked something. Here was wanting a civilized something which had always been at his elbow to back up his authority. His imperious will was suddenly an empty thing. Not he, but this tall, cold man with the narrow eyes held the situation in hand. Furious words choked unborn in his throat and he trembled with the thwarting of his will. But he suffered the captain to lead him back across the gangplank to the boat.

The cockney lingered a moment. He was two handed man enough in his own right to appreciate a brother human. He came close to King and murmured:

"Lemme give you the orfice, cully. Don't you go runnin' afoul o' that bloke. 'E's a ruddy Proosian hemperor around 'ere."

With that he quickly skipped across the gangplank to be in ready attendance on the great man who, aboard ship again, felt that intangible civilized something that bolstered his authority to be comfortingly present once more. He recovered his assertiveness sufficiently to stamp

the deck and to grate between grinding teeth that he would square up matters yet; that he would call that ruffian to account.

But for all his ravings, the gangplank pulled back to the boat; the boat's nose pulled back from the clay bank; and the boat snorted on its slow way. King grinned widely to himself.

"Looks like some one's been speakin' evil of me somewhere. Gotta admit a bad reputation *is* a help. Now let's take a look at that other fellow."

He ascended the bank leisurely. The little ape shadow scuttled to him.

"*Bwana*, he hides in a bush clump two spear throws from here. One man watches; he will signal the jackal call if he moves."

"Good. Bring a lantern and come along."

Approaching the bush clump, King called out:

"Hey, there, feller, if you've got a gun don't pull any wild stuff. This is a new deal."

The fugitive ran out from his hiding as though catapulted. He sprang aside in sudden surprise to see how close to him a dark spear man had stood all the while; then he came forward with open hand.

"American? By golly, this is like a miracle from heaven."

"Hm. That'll all depend," said King noncommittally. "But come on in anyhow and wrap in a blanket while the boys dry out your clothes; you can't sit wet in this climate. And don't you know enough not to jump out of boats in these rivers? A fifteen foot croc could have grabbed you off just as easy as nothing."

IN THE TENT King took stock of the stranger. He stripped down to a clean, athletic looking youngster with a readily smiling face and honest open eyes. He was silent while he robed himself in the blanket King gave him; embarrassed, not knowing what to say to the quiet man who seemed to know just what to do and whose arrangements all clicked off like clockwork.

To King he did not seem to be any frightful criminal. He handed the wet clothes out of the tent, noting as he did so that the youngster carried no pistol in a hip pocket—nothing, in fact. To the skinny brown hand that took the clothes through the tent flap he said—

"*Kaffa, lete moto chai.*"

"A cup of hot tea with a dash of rum in it will be just about right for you. Now then, feller, squat and tell me what it's all about. What have you done that they wanted to pinch you for?"

The youngster grinned up into King's face.

"I hadn't any money to pay my passage. I bluffed it out and ducked the steward till a little way back there; and then that big fellow got suspicious."

"Come clean, feller," growled King. "If I'm going to lend you a hand I want to know the yarn from the inside. If you've got no money, what the devil d'you want to steal a ride to this hole for? If all you did was to be broke, what was that big noise so interested for? He's no river tramp official. Come across with all of it."

"Honest, mister—er—"

"King's the name," said King, watching the other. It meant nothing to the youngster; he was very new to all this country.

"Honest Injun, Mr. King. I know nothing about that man, except that he's a swine. And I'll tell you, straight, why I came down. I got out of college last year; and—my name's Weston, by the way—and my dad gave me a year to poke around before getting my nose down to the desk. I'm interested in glyphs, so I came to Egypt. Then in Khartoum I lost nearly all my money, so—"

"Street of Beni Hassan's Mosque, I'll bet," interjected King. "Confess, now—and when you woke up your money belt was gone, no?"

"Well—er—yes. Only I came out of it on the steps of the mosque and I

couldn't describe to the police which house it was."

"Yeah, and the police couldn't guess 'cause somebody was due to get about a third of it. Go on. And—"

"And—well, some little time before I'd bought a map from a Greek showing the location of some buried ivory across the Abyssinian border near Dawesh."

"Humph!" grunted King judicially. "What college was it that taught you all the things you know?"

The boy became suddenly abashed. Here, in the presence of this man who positively oozed experience and common sense, his enthusiasm about a map of buried treasure looked to him like the very acme of youthful gullibility. But he had a certain defensive excuse.

"But, Mr. King, he had a tusk with him, a small one; and he couldn't come back himself because there was a judgment against him for debt, and in Abyssinia they chain them to their creditors till the debt is paid. I checked up on him at the Greek consul's in Khartoum. The consul said it was true the man had come from Dawesh and he, too, knew about there being some ivory near there. There was another Greek—a trader who—"

"O-ho, the Vertannes cache," King murmured. "Well, go ahead."

"Well, then, I was just about flat; and I didn't dare cable dad—he's a deacon and a pillar of the church and all that. But I had enough left in the hotel to buy passage as far as Taufikia; and I had to save a few piastres for outfit at Dawesh; so I took a chance at bumming the ride from Taufikia on; and—" he suddenly grinned whole heartedly—"by golly, I nearly made it, didn't I?"

KING'S eyes disappeared between thin slits of lids and his mouth spread across his face in a silent line. This youngster was all right. King could understand him exactly; it was not so many years before that he would have done just the same thing; would have gone out on the same harebrained hunt for the sheer glorious adventure of it. This kid was the right kind. King was all for encouraging him, as he himself would have appreciated encouragement during his own hard beginnings. In point of years there was not much more than a decade between them; but King felt himself to be a grandfather in experience. He pointed an admonishing finger at the other.

"Now listen, young feller, to one of the things your economics prof at that college didn't teach you. You thought ivory was worth a helluva pile of money, didn't you? Well, son, you can buy ivory at Khartoum right now for about a dollar a pound—if you know where to go. That's average for soft Egyptian. If it should happen to be hard Ambriz or Gabun, that would add maybe fifty per cent. Scrivelloes—billiard ball stuff—might double it. On the other hand, it might be French Sudan—ringy—and that would cut it right in half.

"So there's more to buried ivory than just a map. You don't know where those teeth came from. Ivory will travel the length and breadth of Africa for maybe half a century, as currency, before some trader gets to ship it out.

"Now it happens that I've known about this little cache for months, same as the Greek consul. I haven't gone after it because it's only the big loads that pay a profit. What with cost of *safari* and buying information and hunting up clues and all that, this little pile wouldn't cover costs. There's only half a dozen tusks at best—call them fifty pounds apiece, if you're lucky—and there's no nourishment in that. Still, if you've got a map—a real one—that would save a whole lot of running around and you'd maybe pay a dividend. What was the name of this Greek who saw you coming?"

"Petropoulides—a short fat chap with a limp."

King nodded.

"Petropoulides? That old fox may have got hold of something. You see, the yarn is that this other Greek was hoping to pack his teeth out through

Abyssinia, rather than pay Sudan duty; and the local chief wanted to grab his tithe; so the Greek buried it and then he up and died. Quite likely brother Petropoulides inherited some information. Mebbe we'll go look-see if we can snoop around and pick up the trail some time. But that isn't so important right now."

King frowned into far distance through unseen tent walls. There was something in all this affair that he, who liked to understand all things, did not understand at all. He brought his gaze back and cocked a questioning finger at the man who huddled in his blanket.

"Now what d'you figure a large buzzard of this Fanshawe man's caliber was so interested in you for—you being an American? And why should I be a confederate of yours—I being an American? What's he got such a mad against poor old Uncle Sam for? Do you figure that Fanshawe is after your half dozen tusks of ivory too?"

The young man's eyes opened wide.

"Gosh, I don't know. He sure was a lot more vindictive than my couple of pounds passage money warranted; and he wasn't an officer of the boat."

King grunted and looked again into distance. Whatever high value the youngster might place upon the glorious adventure of hunting for buried treasure, King was quite sure that no such ephemeral lure had brought that other forceful man, so obviously a man of large affairs, on a long and uncomfortable trip to Dawesh. And why should such a man be so insanely prejudiced against Americans? Why so insistent upon catching and holding two people just because they were Americans?

The thinly introspective eyes opened the veriest trifle at the upper lids; hard little lines began to grow at their corners. Here was a mystery—that in itself was something to lure investigation. Further, the mystery was directed at him; impersonally, perhaps, on account of his nationality; but—a deep, perpendicular line grew between his brows and his lips formed a thin horizontal to it—that man had made the thing acutely personal by setting his black men on to manhandle King; in the presence of other white men, too; and much worse, in the presence of his own *safari*, who, of course, had watched every little move from the bank above. For that, in Africa, there was no forgiveness.

And at that King's smile began slowly to break, the wide mouth first, then the eyes in narrow slits, then wrinkles all over both sides of his face.

He turned purposefully to Weston.

"It's none of my damn business. I was just sitting looking at the scenery when that big noise came and made a blot on it. It makes me nervous that he should be mad at poor old Uncle Sam. Mebbe we'll go look-see if we can snoop around and pick up that queer trail first—just sort of en route to your ivory."

The youngster was full of enthusiasm.

"Say, Mr. King, it's swell of you to offer to help me find that stuff. I'm beginning to see that I'd have a pretty thin chance in this country—even with a map. And if it's not worth very much and it's going to be expensive—anyway, if we do find it, of course, we'll have to consider it a fifty-fifty proposition. And if I can reciprocate any way—I mean finding out whatever you want to know about this Fanshawe—"

King grinned delightedly.

"That's fine. But I guess you'd better keep outa that bird's territory for awhile. And we can mebbe write off my share of your ivory to the sheer joy of having made this good Mr. Fanshawe's acquaintance."

KING was snooping. He was at the little outpost town of Bahr Yezdi. Young Weston had been left at the last camp just across the Abyssinian border line with the great Masai spearman in charge of safari. So King knew that everything would be exactly as he had left it. With him was only Kaffa, his wizened little Hottentot—because Kaffa had the inquisitive observation of a monkey and

nothing moved that he did not instantly note and watch.

King's method of snooping was to stalk into the office of the local assistant superintendent of police. The official's greeting was almost a description of the visitor.

"Why, hello and hello again, you long Yank. I thought you were bothering the local powers somewhere down in British East— Boy, two whisky pegs bring! Come in under the fan and tell us what ill wind blows you into my peaceful bailiwick."

King put his pith helmet on the desk and stretched his length gratefully under the swinging palm leaf *punkah* that was pulled by a Sudanese boy through a hole in the wall.

"I'm snooping," he said ingenuously.

"You would be. What mess are you stirring up now? For Harry's sake, Kingi *bwana*, don't go bringing any trouble into my district. We're all peaceful and quiet just now—except of course these slave runner blighters; and there's some talk about native uprising down Mongalla way. But everything else is all nice and comfy."

King raised one eyebrow.

"You haven't heard any particular howl about me—I mean, not recently?"

"I told you we were all peaceful here."

"Well, then," said King with certitude, "the boat hasn't got back from Dawesh. I kinda thought it might have passed me."

"With whom have you been having trouble on the— I say, you don't mean Fanshawe?

King nodded, grinning at the other's consternation.

"For Harry's sake, Kingi *bwana*—I mean for your own sake, don't go having trouble with Fanshawe. Why, man, he's a power in finance. He's president and majority stock holder of the United Kingdom Construction Company and he's a director in half a dozen other big things in London. He pulls weight even in Imperial politics. He may be knighted any day. A complaint from him could make almost anybody's desk in Africa uncomfortable. And I tell you, he's merciless. 'No excuse for inefficiency' is his motto; and everything that doesn't go his way is inefficient, and out goes the man. Don't you be fool enough to run foul of that man, Kingi."

"Hmph! Sounds like considerable eggs." King filled his pipe with methodical care and puffed luxuriously. "What's this U. K. Construction crowd do?"

"They're engineers on a big scale. Roads, bridges, harbor works, anything; nothing is too big for them. The rumor is that Fanshawe went into a rage and fired half a dozen men quite high up and came down here personally to look into some big irrigation contract that—"

The policeman stopped, feeling that he was perhaps verging upon official secrets. King grinned at him from under his level brows.

"Shucks, you're not telling me anything. I know all about that deal. That's the big irrigation dam project in Abyssinia. Your people have been wanting to build it for the last twenty years so you could have the water to irrigate another couple million acres of cotton here in the Sudan and control prices over the neck of Egypt if she gets too fresh—cotton being Egypt's chief revenue."

The policeman laughed, though constrainedly.

"Really, Kingi *bwana*, you ascribe motives to us that—"

King waved the objection aside with his pipe.

"Aw, be yourself, chief; you know there's nothing can be kept secret in Africa. I know as well as you do that the Abyssinian Government has dodged letting your people have that contract 'cause a smart Russian military expert scared 'em by saying that a dam like that would mean heavy concrete and that concrete could mean gun emplacements, and that the work would necessitate a good road all the way in from your Sudan, and that artillery could travel on a good road; and then he showed 'em the map of Africa and pointed out how much of it was already colored pink; and he re-

minded 'em about the French raid on Fashoda; and—"

"Kingi *bwana*, you have the suspicious mind of a Machiavelli."

King lifted an eyebrow.

"Suspicious hell! None of it's my own bright reasoning. That's the last twenty years of Afro-European politics. Your people aren't the only ones in it; they're all playing it up there in Addis. There's agents from every country in Europe, all telling the king that none of the others is after any good. And quite aside from that, there's fifty million dollars' worth of work involved in this irrigation stuff, and that's worth grabbing off too." King paused a moment before continuing.

"But what's this U. K. Construction crowd poking around for? That American syndicate, Simon L. Green Company, has just about got that deal all sewed up since they were able to prove to the King that America wasn't interested in territory; and all they wanted was the job, get the money and get out."

The policeman was piqued.

"Not quite true, my Kingi diplomat." And then he shut suddenly up, closer than a clam.

King almost grinned.

"It's pretty nearly right," he said. "I happen to know all about it because I took the survey party in last season. A good bunch of boys. Peterson, their medico, just about pulled me out of the long dark hole when I was running a steady hundred and four malaria; wouldn't give me a bill, either; all a home team together on foreign ground, he said. Well, that crowd has got their draft contract all agreed to and they're waiting with a gold fountain pen. It's only final details now.

"Hell, this Fanshawe man, big as he is, even if he could cut the deal from under them, underbid them or something, he couldn't cut in on it. He can't argue the Abyssinians out of their fixed policy of twenty years—there's too many other European diplomats would all gang up against him, each one rooting for his own crowd."

KING was talking to cover up his thoughts. This long winded rambling speech was not like him. He hid behind a screen of furious pipe smoke while quick suspicions raced through his mind. The policeman too sat silent, vaguely uneasy that perhaps he had let slip something about the great man's doings that he himself did not know any better than by the tea table gossip of the little white community at Bahr Yezdi. Though he himself was in the dark, he had a professional appreciation of the diabolical aptitude of his visitor for digging information out of the dark mazes of African intrigue.

King made a move to go.

"I suppose it's all right if I camp in the government rest house overnight before I light out tomorrow."

The policeman was relieved.

"Oh, certainly, by all means. There's a secretary of the big man's occupying part of it just now with a lot of baggage, but there's plenty of room. His Nibs is an honored guest at the D. C's house. But listen, Kingi *bwana*, for my sake, if not for yours—get out before he comes back. If you get into any argument with him, the whole district will be hounded till we've offered you up as a burnt sacrifice."

"Don't worry," said King gravely. "I'm a busy man. Tomorrow isn't coming nearly soon enough—but thanks for the warning."

King needed to think. What deep affair had he stumbled upon? He installed himself in the rest house, told his Hottentot to run away and pretend he was a monkey—which meant that the little man's natural curiosity would lead him to pry into everything everywhere—and then with great deliberation and precision he filled a pipe. He needed to take counsel with himself.

This much was patent: The man Fanshawe was interested in the big dam contract. He was deeply interested; otherwise he would not have undertaken such a journey himself.

Well, who would not be, in view of a fifty million dollar turnover—quite aside from any possible imperial policy that might be involved. He was interested in rivalry with the American concern that was on the point of closing the deal; otherwise why the suspicion against two stray individuals just because they were Americans? And why such a frantic—for a man of his caliber, undignified—fury against Americans? Clearly because they might be agents of the rival concern who might spy out what deep plan he was working upon to snatch the big deal.

And there stood that blank wall of the question, "Yes, but how?"

King thought of every business possibility. He twisted the thing inside out. A subsidiary company under another name? A holding company with foreign capitalization? Some deep maneuver of high finance with a camouflaged incorporation in innocuous Finland or in soldierless Monaco?

None of them would hold water. The question remained unanswerable. King consumed many pipefuls and tasted none of them. There was only one thing to do. To accept the accusation that the big man had hurled and to become a real spy on his movements. To take up the trail and to camp on it unseen, as King knew very expertly how to do.

The thought came of course that it was none of it any of his business. King was no employee of the Simon L. Green Company—he'd be hanged if he'd hire out as anybody's employee. He was not interested in the Abyssinian people's obsessions about European aggression. He had no quarrel with the imperial policies of any European government, Fanshawe's or any other. But—

That Fanshawe . . . What an autocrat of big business! What a demigodling of money bags—ready to catch and lock up in an African jail a harmless youngster on the off chance that he might be a business rival! Well, that, of course, was big business.

But then, again, those Simon L. Green boys. That had been a good trip with them. And Peterson, the doctor. That had been expert and tireless nursing that he had given to King—without it, he might easily have slid from malaria into the dreaded black water fever. Well—King nodded to himself with a tightening of the mouth—if those American boys wanted the big contract, he, King, was all for them. After all, they'd put in the work.

HE STRETCHED his corded arms above his head and creaked the sinews of his shoulders, cramped from long and motionless cogitation. He lighted a fresh pipe and his expression slowly changed back to his normal one of smiling thinly out at the world. He called for his Hottentot servant. The little man came and, at a nod from King, squatted in a corner. With his wizened black face and bright, restless eyes peering out of a ragged khaki shooting coat of his master's that swept the floor, he looked more like a dressed up monkey than ever.

"Well, little wise one, did you have a good day playing in the bazaars?"

The little man contorted his countless grinning wrinkles to look solemn.

"Yes, *bwana*. No man knows anything about that great man, except that he is a very great man."

King had given him no instructions about the great man; but that was the shrewd little bush dweller's value—he knew how to do things without detailed instructions.

"If no man knows his doings," said King appreciatively, "that in itself is a mark of greatness."

"Yes, *bwana*." The little man contorted his wrinkles to look preternaturally wise. "But I know, *bwana*."

King chuckled. He had counted upon some light upon this tangle.

"For knowledge there is reward in this world," he quoted the maxim.

"Yes, *bwana*—and I have no tobacco. That great man, *bwana*, prepares to make safari."

"That may well be guessed."

"It is indeed so, *bwana:* any black savage might guess. But this great man prepares to make safari into Abyssinia."

"That is good guessing."

"No, *bwana:* that is true knowledge—from the tally of his baggage."

"Ha, you have then made talk with his servants?"

"No, *bwana.* His servants are black men from Cairo, speaking Inglesi and very proud. They know nothing; they do not even know how to read the tale of the different baggages. But I have seen it all. It is in the bottom room of this house."

"A good reading of the tale is worth perhaps a small piece of tobacco."

"Yes, *bwana*—only for a very good reading, a bigger piece. Now this great man's baggage reads that he makes a small safari, of not many days. It reads that he does not make safari among the savages of the south where the white men go to hunt game; for he has cartridges for but one small gun; neither has he goods for trade with the naked peoples. Moreover, that man, having gone in the boat to Dawesh, it is clear that he makes preparation for his small safari into Abyssinia."

"Hm. That is a reading that shows craft, thou bush imp; but that knowledge is worth not a very big piece of tobacco. We must follow that man's safari into Abyssinia."

"Yes, *bwana,* not a very big piece. We must follow. Only—" the imp squirmed his body and screwed his face into a wrinkled mask of gnomish gloating—"only in the bush, Nama, the great snake, who is very wise, does not follow his prey but goes to that place first and waits for it."

"Ha!" King's judicial calm was stirred. "What do you know, imp? What secret hides beneath all this talk?"

The Hottentot writhed and cackled in shrill appreciation of his own astuteness.

"Keh-heh-heh-heh! It is the custom, when one makes safari into Abyssinia, to carry a gift to the chief into whose district one goes."

"And don't I know it!" murmured King to himself, remembering the great Ras Gabre Gorgis' craze for carpets—horribly bulky things to carry; and Ras Masfan's childish delight in strong perfumes. "Well, what do you read from the gifts?"

"*Bwana,* among the great man's baggage are four cases of wood set aside for gifts. They contain a food in pots which is eaten by white men who are rich and which those Inglesi speaking servants—who are all great thieves—steal for their own unworthy stomachs. It is a very good food. I have seen such a food before in Abyssinia."

"Ha! What is the name of this food, apeling? And where in Abyssinia have you seen it? It might well be a clue."

"I do not know the name of that food, *bwana.* But those servants are very stupid thieves, and if one more pot be counted against them they will receive no greater a beating. So—" the imp shape writhed again within the sagging old shooting coat and handed to his master a round earthenware jar, sealed over the lid with tape and the pretentious seal of Desbrosses Frères of Paris, and containing *paté de foie gras.*

King let out a whoop.

"O prince of bush imps! This is verily a marker for the road. This is a knowledge worth six sticks of tobacco. Although—" a doubt came to him—"is there perchance any other?"

"Nay, *bwana,* do we not know? The Betwadet Haillu takes weeskee; Lij Zakhiel takes cartridges and women; Ras Hapta Mariam takes all three. Who is there left amongst these hill chieflings except the Fitaurari Yilma, the old general of King Menelek, who has no teeth?"

"True, O wisest of many apes. Yet, the Fitaurari is but a little chief. What so great a business can so great a man have with so small a chief?"

"That, *bwana,* is a knowledge that is not written in the tale of those baggages."

"Hm. Four days trek up the hills from Dawesh. What the devil! He'll have to come back here to get his stuff.

The D. C. may give him a fast launch back to Dawesh—or he may trek from here. But good Lord! The contract is practically tied up. What can he do? How can he steal it?"

With quick decision came energy.

"Little man, the trail leads first to Dawesh. Since that man went there, knowledge must exist in Dawesh."

"Yes, *bwana*, first to Dawesh and then, armed with knowledge, to the Fitaurari. It will be a good trail. For two more such pots of this food—three in all—the Fitaurari instructs a female slave to attend upon all the wants of the giver. Moreover, for the loss of two more pots will the beating of those proud servants be none the greater."

"Out, scoundrel, out!" shouted King. "We have no time to waste upon your pilfering; no risk to waste upon your getting caught. It is an order. We go at once."

"Yes, *bwana*—" the Hottentot was immediately attentive—"we go at once. There is no delay. Two such pots are in my pack bundle."

KING astonished young Weston by the fierce energy with which he swooped down upon his camp across the Abyssinian border and ordered, quick-quick, up and on the trail to Dawesh. The youngster was too much of a greenhorn to be astonished at the speed with which camp was broken and got under way. The big Masai growled fierce orders to the porters. Each man knew which articles went into his load. There was none of the endless argument about trying to disclaim something from one's load and shove it on to another. Loads were packed; nothing was left out; the safari was away before the youngster knew exactly where they were going.

"Dawesh," explained King. "Didn't your map say your cache was somewhere along the old caravan trail? Well, it's a coincidence, but I've got a strong hunch that this Fanshawe bird is getting all set to take that same trail."

"That's no coincidence, Mr. King. That makes it pretty obvious that he's after that ivory, don't you think? Golly, d'you suppose that means perhaps there's more'n you thought?"

"I wish I knew just what he's after," grumbled King. I'm hoping mebbe to dig up some dope from a wily Syrian Jew trader who's lived in Dawesh ever since it was invented. I guess anyway he'll be able to tell us whether friend Petropoulides stole a map somewhere or whether he just drew it."

The youngster was full of gratitude.

"I sure appreciate all the trouble you're going to, Mr. King. I only hope there'll be enough to cover expenses."

King smiled with a tight lipped benignity.

"That's all right, young feller. I sorta hope to be killing more than one bird with one stone. Mebbe this Fanshawe buzzard will be one of them."

In Dawesh King went straight to the group of beehive wattle and daub *tukuls*, connected by twisted passages, that constituted the trade store and residence of Yakoub ben Abrahm. An anomalous odor, half of divine coffee and half of ill cured leopard and serval skins and other assorted foulness, stifled the dim warren. Old Yakoub rubbed his hands together as he raised quick, bird-like eyes up to King out of a tangle of grizzled face hair and greeted him with half apprehensive friendliness.

"Come in, come in, Meester Kingi *bwana*. It is seldom that you honor my poor house."

"That's 'cause I lose money every time I come here," said King cheerfully. "Come on, gimme some coffee and let's talk trade."

The hands washed themselves silkily.

"Trade, Meester Kingi, I can always talk. And you know that for you and for your friends my prices are the lowest and my services are free for the pleasure of doing business with one whose word is my contract."

"Hooey," said King. "What about that American I sent up to you to outfit for going out leopard hunting?"

The hands flung out deprecatingly.

"You want to throw that up against me? I tell you, Meester Kingi, that man was ordained to be swindled. You don't know what money he had. That man's function in the world is to pay high prices to poor men who serve him. How could I make my prices to you if I did not make a little profit from the strangers that the good God sends? Tell me your needs and see the price I make for you."

"I'm not buying," said King. "I'm trading. I'll trade you information for information. You've tried for five years to find out who's the big chief amongst those lower Sudan Nilotic tribes who controls the gold dust that filters down to Khartoum. Well, I'll trade."

The old man put a quick hand on King's sleeve and drew him down a crooked passage to a smaller and darker hive that smelled more terribly than the first. His shrewd little black eyes shone.

"You tell me that, Meester Kingi, and I will make a profit that you—you are a child yet in trade—you will die with envy. What information do you want that you offer me this?"

King laughed.

"If you can see any fortune in it, you old wizard, it's all yours. I could never do anything with those drips and drabs that come downriver. Here's what I want— But this is not for bazaar gossip, Yakoub."

The trader laid his palm to his beard.

"By the sacred books. Sit here close and tell me."

"All right. Now listen. There was a man—Fanshawe—on the last boat. *M'kubwa sana,* a big man all round; money, influence, everything. He's proposing to make a little trek up the trail."

The other nodded.

"Yes, he was here. He made a big stir and gave orders to everybody and he held long conferences with the English consul here. Tcheh! if I had known. But that is the trouble with these rich Englishmen. Their consuls and their commissioners all run to their help and make all arrangements for them. A trader gets no chance, for their consuls know the prices. Well, it is past; he has gone back with the boat. Where does he want to trek, this great man?"

"I think—" King chose his words carefully—"to visit Fitaurari Yilma."

"Ah, the old Fitaurari? That is four days on the caravan trail—for you, three. But—" the trader was surprised—"what does he want of the old man?"

"That's what you've got to tell me, Yakoub. You've been here for I don't know how long. Nothing has ever happened that hasn't come to you; and you've never forgotten anything. Now tell me what you know about the Fitaurari? Everything—every little thing. So we can perhaps piece out why this millionaire wants to visit this little chief. And so you'll earn the gold dust information."

THE JEW sat and clawed his thin fingers through his beard while his eyes dimmed in far back memories.

"The Fitaurari, henh? Old Yilma? Well, now, let me see. He was a general of King Menelek. He gained great favor with the King at the time of the Italian defeat at Adowa. His reputation was very brave and he was a young man of brains; he took many prisoners with his own hand; and Menelek gave him twenty thousand lire out of the indemnity.

"That was a long time ago. And then—and then what? There is not much. He remained a member of the king's councilors, and since he was clever he was the speaker of the king with the foreign ministers who all came to the country after that victory. And then there was some disagreement about something and the king was angry with him and he came here to his estates to live.

"That was before the World War; and since then, nothing. He has never gone back to court. He has enough money but no influence, and he has just grown to be the old Fitaurari living in his jungle estates out of the way of everything.

There is nothing about the old man to make a business for your millionaire. What business is he interested in?"

"He is—" King shot out a compelling forefinger at the other—"remember, Yakoub: on the sacred books you promised."

The Jew bowed.

"On the sacred books."

"Good. He's interested in big engineering. Anything. Bridges, dams. I suspect that he's interested in the big irrigation dam up on the Abbai. I have a hunch he's hoping to steal the deal from the Americans. That's all I know and I'm guessing at that. Now think, Yakoub. Remember everything that ever happened with the Fitaurari; or anywhere around here. What has there ever been that could help this man queer the deal before it's all signed up? And if he did, how in hell could he grab it for a British concern?"

The old man clawed his beard, and slowly a dim light began to grow in his eyes. He nodded, and then nodded again as events began to piece themselves out. Softly he began to chuckle and to nod with a deeper conviction.

"Yes, yes, that would do it. Yes—*aie!* but they are clever, those people. That was why that consul—yes, surely that was it. But the Fitaurari, he is not in it at all—unless at the end. Oh, yes, yes!"

He thrust eloquent hands at King across the table.

"Listen, my friend, and I will tell you a story—a rumor it was, even to me; but in fits in now here to make a whole piece. *Aie*, how deep are the ways of diplomats. Yes, those people should be traders.

"Listen, now. Menelek the Lion, he was the creator of unified Abyssinia—but he was a fool. A great fighter, who brought all the big chiefs under his rule; a shrewd man, but ignorant of all things outside. After Adowa he thought he was a king like those of Europe and he made treaties with all those diplomats, from which Abyssinia is still suffering; for diplomats are traders, too; treaties are the profits of their bargaining and they never let go of them."

King's face was alight. His mouth was set but his eyes a-sparkle as he followed every word of the old trader. He could see where the trend was; he required only details. His pipe was cold between his teeth; he only nodded to the other to go on.

"So old Menelek made treaties for everything outside of his hills. You know his saying: 'Our mountains are our defense.' He signed away his boundaries, his sea coast, everything. He was a fool. Only inside his country he would sign away nothing. For twenty years—you know that too—the British engineers have known that they would need this irrigation. Ah, they are clever, those people. That is no secret. But there were others; other European diplomats who were at the king's ear and they were afraid of the British. So old Menelek would never sign."

The eloquent hands drooped, expressive of lessened emphasis.

"That much is in the history of international intrigue in Africa. You know it yourself. From here commences the rumor. There was appointed to Dawesh a British consul. There had been a consul before this one to take care of the caravan trade into Sudan. But this one—Townleigh his name—he was too clever a man to be wasted by his government in such a job. A man of charm, of much persuasion—often have I sold him supplies at almost no profit. He made a long visit to the capital to discuss trades and tariffs and so on. But the gossip was that he went, in the guise of an unimportant consul from the interior, so that the other diplomats would not interfere. He went to talk, not tariffs but treaties, with the king."

The old Jew bowed his head and laughed in long cackling chuckles. He could appreciate just such cleverness.

"*Aie, aie!* Yes, to talk treaty; that was the rumor. Then Townleigh came back and looked to be well satisfied; although word came that he was to be recalled and another consul sent to fill his place. So the very secret rumor then was—listen to this, my friend—the whisper that came

to me was that he had persuaded the obstinate old Menelek and had a treaty in his pocket."

"By God!" It burst from King like a gun shot. "A treaty would do it. An old Menelek treaty would give unbreakable prior right. That's how the French got the railroad and the Italians got the wireless station and— But what happened then, Yakoub? What became of the treaty, if there ever was one? Where does the old Fitaurari come in?"

The eloquent hands shrugged ignorance.

"Who can say, my friend, if there ever was a treaty? The whisper that came to me was so secret that it did not come until long afterward. But it was at that time that Fitaurari Yilma, councilor of silly old Menelek, had his so serious disagreement with the king and was banished to his estates here. And then—consider this, my friend—one of the many sicknesses of this country overtook Consul Townleigh, and he died. It was unfortunate; for he was a man of great charm. He died before the new consul arrived."

KING suddenly reached his fist across the table and shook it under the old Jew's nose.

"Damn you, Yakoub!" he grinned. "You're doing this on purpose, just to see if you can get me going. Come on, shoot the works now. What became of the treaty?"

The old man threw up his hands.

"My friend, I have never said there was a treaty. It was a rumor, a whisper, a breath."

"Damn your whispers and your breaths. What happened after this Townleigh died?"

"After that," said the old man, as one concluding an argument, "there was some confusion—before the new consul came; and then came the World War and there was nothing else but confusion. But a whisper came to me that before the new consul came, some little things were stolen—not things of any value; for the watchman was an ex-soldier and faithful.

"Maps, the whisper said. The Abyssinians have always been afraid of maps. The Kitchener survey almost caused a revolution; and then Germans and Frenchmen who came as traders were always making maps—that was before the war. And then later again a veriest breath of a whisper came to me that the stolen things had been taken to Fitaurari Yilma. Might it not be?" The Jew completed his question with outflung hands and shaggy eyebrows that lifted into his low hanging hair.

King's narrowed gray eyes looked across the dingy table into the other's bright black ones. Both men nodded in slow unison many times. The Jew thrust out a dark skinny finger and ticked off items against his palm.

"Consider, my friend. Fitaurari Yilma, bold, intelligent. Councilor of the king in his foreign dealings. He disagrees with the king; a disagreement so strong that he is banished; he returns to his estates. Townleigh, the clever consul, also returns. He dies. Papers are stolen—maybe a map; maybe—who knows what? The papers go to Fitaurari Yilma. Then comes the great war and all is confusion. Now comes an American firm about to get the coveted contract. No country in Europe today can afford to let fifty million dollars' worth of work slip out of its hands. Does it not all fit, my friend? Does it not make a whole piece?"

"And so—" King completed the train of reasoning—"the great man Fanshawe goes to visit the little hill chief Yilma. Yes, by golly, it all fits; fits like a jigsaw job—every piece. If such a paper exists it would be recognized, even at Geneva, as prior right. It would be the one card that's left to Fanshawe to play; and it'd be the winning ace, too. But why would the old Fitaurari have hung on to such a thing? Why wouldn't he have destroyed it?"

The Jew shook his head.

"Never. You know the old law; the man who destroyed the seal of Menelek

must lose the hand that did it. And now that the great king is dead the thing has become almost sacred."

King nodded.

"Yep, you're right. He must still have it—and I've got to get it."

Sudden energy came to him. He jumped up from the table; his eyes glinted hard and he breathed hard through his nose.

"Yakoub, you've done me a service. I've got no time now. Got to go like the devil. If that man went back on the boat and started his trek from there, he'll be well on his way. I'll come back and give you full details of the gold dust."

Yakoub bowed.

"I am well satisfied to wait."

At the door King stopped.

"And write me a letter to the Fitaurari, will you? I don't know him; I may need a recommendation. I'll fetch it as I go by."

Twenty paces down the mud road he turned and dashed back.

"One more thing, Yakoub. You know Petropoulides. He sold a map for some buried teeth. I want to know, did he invent it or is it worth looking for?"

The trader threw out his hands.

"My friend, you are surely not wasting your time with such play."

"No, no, Yakoub. I have a boy whose life's first great adventure this is. A good lad. A little encouragement is good when one is young."

The Jew laughed out loud and turned to enter his dark doorway.

"Run away, Meester Grandpapa Kingi *bwana*. You do not fool me. You would rather run after a profitless treasure hunt than settle down to business and make some hard money out of this gold dust. As for the map, it is possibly good. That fellow was 'Poulides' cousin. He died right there in Yilma's village. The teeth must be close by. 'Poulides never went to get them because Yilma demanded the old Abyssinian law of each right tusk for the king; and what would then be left for him? But for you it is different. Run along, Meester Kingi, and play."

LIKE a whirlwind King swept into his noonday camp.

"Up, up! Away! We've got no time to lose. Three days hard going to your teeth, young feller. Your map seems to be all right. But we've got to move. Fanshawe is on his way."

Weston was all excited.

"Have you had news, Mr. King? How could you get news here? Are you sure he's after the ivory? How do you know he's started? Come on, I'm all ready!"

King grinned at the thrill that the other was getting out of it all. Watching this keen youngster, shepherding him along, he lived over again the exhilaration of his first days when things were new and the fascinating unknown lurked around every corner.

And for that matter, as the shrewd old Jew had taunted him, he had never outgrown that same thrill; he was just as keen as eight years ago when he had been new. It was alas for him that, with experience, there remained fewer unknown things. But it was his delight not to disillusion the suspense of the other.

"I don't know a thing, young feller. No news. But I'm giving Fanshawe credit for being no kind of a fool to waste any time right now. We've got a shorter leg to go—just about due north by the caravan trail—while he'll be making a long slant from our left. But he's got a good start. Come ahead. The Masai will bring the porters along; they'll overtake us."

Passing the trader's store, King stopped for his letter of introduction. The Jew, smiling, handed him a sheet of notebook paper, without envelope. Upon it he had written only a single laconic line in the intricate Ethiopic script.

> This man is King, my friend. Whatever he will tell you will be true.

King nodded soberly.

"You're a good egg, Yakoub."

The eloquent hands pushed away thanks.

"No, no, Meester Kingi. It is only

very difficult for me to write this terrible language. So I make it short. Go quickly now. Only just a minute— Hey, there, boy. *Bocklo amta.*"

Out of one of the beehive *tukuls* a servant led a mule, saddled and ready. The Jew inspected girth and reins. He signed to the Hottentot to take charge.

"They told me the young man was very new. He will lie down and die on the hill trails at your rate of travel. Go now, my friend. And for the sake of my gold dust which you owe me, take care of yourself."

The caravan trail left the river immediately outside of the town and within a mile struck the first slope of the series of wide shelves which rose in steep steps eight thousand feet up to the main Abyssinian plateau. In the heavier jungle where the sun filtered thinly, the slippery clay path had not dried out so well after the rains and the going was not too good.

King was consumed by a restless urge to push on. Now that he had found out what the prize was and how much it could mean, he could understand why the angry financier had dismissed less successful subordinates and had come so far afield to handle the delicate negotiation personally. And, while he couldn't like the man, while his whole soul rebelled from the ruthless system, he had an uneasy respect for the will that had carried the magnate to his lofty position, and had now brought him so far out of his normal sphere. That kind of will would trample through to the end.

With each rise where the down mountain winds had thinned the vegetation along the brow King scoured the long ridges to the left of him with his prism glasses. He was sure that the man would have wasted no time.

The day passed; the night; the next day of hard travel. The going was slower than King had hoped. Three days the trader had confidently allowed him to make a trek that normally consumed four. Yet the village of Fitaurari Yilma remained two full days' distant.

It was not till the third afternoon that Kaffa pointed to a far ridge that swept up to meet the hogback along the spine of which the caravan trail crawled.

"Men travel in that jungle," he announced.

KING brought his glasses to bear, not on the jungle, which was impenetrable, but on the sky. Yes, there was a concentration and a distinct dip in the wide circles that the vultures swung high in the blue. The birds did not drop and the concentration moved slowly up hill. So whatever it was, was alive and traveling; and men, because vultures do not follow moving game in the jungle. King judged the distance critically.

"That would be about the right direction for the Bahr Yezdi trail," he said to Weston. "Whoever they are, they'll reach the meeting with this trail before we do."

"Then they'll be ahead of us. Gosh! Can't we hurry, Mr. King? Here, you take the mule, won't you? Perhaps you could get there first and—and do something or other."

The suggestion was vague enough. A party of unknown numbers was approaching. Yet the boy had a vast confidence that King, should he get there first, would contrive to do something or other. King had no such confidence; his frowning regard of the ridge was anxious. But he grinned and uttered a simple strategy of the trail:

"No need to hurry. It'll be getting on toward dark. They'll camp at the first good place. We'll hold back, and if we come up with them after they're all unloaded we'll have a good hour's start before they get going again, I don't care who they are."

It was another anxiety that bothered King. If this should be the Fanshawe party, how many others might there be? How many white men? If the deputy commissioner and perhaps the police superintendent and one or two others were accompanying so important a personage, it would complicate matters.

But reflection dismissed that thought. This business for many reasons would have to be kept as far as possible from any official complications. King's more cheerful mood was indicated by a tuneless whistling through his teeth as he strode along. He was busy upon the devising of plans to gain more than one hour's start; for his business with the Fitaurari, like all business in Africa, could not be conducted in a hurry.

Only one comment did he make as the steep miles dropped behind.

"Hope to all hell it is the big noise's party and they're not ahead of us."

They came to the joining of the trails. A mess of tracks showed that the other party had already passed.

"What do you read, little bush dweller?" King demanded of Kaffa.

"Mule caravan, *bwana*. Two white men who do not know how to travel; for there are at least fifteen servants to eight, or maybe ten, pack mules; and two riding mules of good quality."

"Hmph! Sounds like our crowd, young feller, no? I'm glad it's mules—it'll take 'em two hours to load up again. They've passed long enough. Let's go on and say hello."

The camp was as straggly and as distraught with confusion as only an African camp can be. Aimless yelling of men cursing the mules, hammering of tent pegs came downwind long before it was in sight.

King threw a look over his shoulder to the Masai, and the jabbering of his porters ceased. He approached softly, warily taking stock of the camp as he came. He was looking particularly for the caravan leader, whoever he might be, who had been appointed to conduct the august traveler; for on this man's initiative much would depend.

It was still daylight on the high hills. King at once distinguished the big form of Fanshawe standing moodily watching the aimless blundering of four men with his tent. A little way off the secretary essayed to help some more men with his own less pretentious tent. To one side a native who wore shoes was importantly directing two other natives in the erection of a cook tent.

"Hai-a, these Frangi travel with a city," muttered Kaffa.

Near Fanshawe a native, very raggedly dressed, stood to smart attention awaiting orders. King's smile was full of joy. That one would be the caravan leader, probably an experienced sergeant of the King's African Rifles, detailed to the job and dressed up—or undressed—for the occasion. Good! A soldier would do anything under orders, but would have no initiative at all.

The soldier pointed and Fanshawe turned quickly to see King approaching, Weston behind him, screened by his height. For a moment Fanshawe was merely surprised—he had seen King only by lantern light before. King spoke:

"Howdy, Mr. Fanshawe. I've got to congratulate you on the good time you made. You sure had me worried."

THEN control slipped from Fanshawe before he could recover from his surprise and catch himself. First he paled; then the blood surged back to his face and rage swept over him.

"You! The man on the bank! The American spy! I knew it! I—how the devil did you get here?"

King's wide grin and careless assurance were maddeningly suggestive of a mild derision for anything that the other might be able to do; and to that egocentric contempt for his power was a thing unaccustomed and not to be borne.

"Curse you!" he shouted. "You ruffianly scum! I'll— Mr. Jepson, here—damn you, why aren't you here?—here are those two American bounders who have been following me."

The secretary came and stood rather ineffectually beside his fuming employer. King's chuckle was full of appreciation. He saw the justice of destiny here. The forceful driver of men, by the very fact of his dominance, had crushed all initiative in his close employee.

To the driver it was infuriating to the point of murder; but there was that cold something in King's grin and in his stance that made the big executive feel strangely impotent.

King still grinned. He could stand the man's abuse. He held all the cards in this game, he felt.

But Weston was younger.

"We don't have to take that," he cried, striding up to the magnate. "See here, mister, cut it. I've listened to as much of that as I'll take from any man."

For a moment Fanshawe looked at him in astonishment, with a sort of incredulity. This boy! This impertinent nothing! Why, he had held the fortunes of hundreds of such youths in the hollow of his hand. He had hired them and fired them by the score at a time. He had merely to press a button before his mighty seat and snap a few words to an underling and the deed was done.

And now this one stood upright before him and—

"You!" The word was almost a scream of triumph, as the big man lunged forward and swung a heavy, open hand. The boy blocked it rather clumsily with his elbow, staggered under the weight of the blow, recovered and landed a glancing swing on the magnate's face.

To the big man that was the completion of release. The blow swept away the ingrained inhibitions of dignity. Gone were the carefully nurtured conventions against ungentlemanly fisticuffs. The primitive man was released.

He roared in his throat and launched another annihilating swing, this time with closed fist. The boy managed to block it again—and then King's hard shoulder thrust in between them.

"Lay off, kid," he grunted. "We can do this without any rough stuff."

But neither was outraged dignity to be easily thwarted from battering, pounding at the thing that had so insulted it; nor was hot young blood willing to stand back. While the big man snarled against King's stiff elbow planted in his throat,

"Lemme go, Mr. King. This is my affair. He can't talk that way to me; and—if he wants that ivory he's got to damn well fight for it."

King held stiff for a long half minute; and then slowly he drew back and shrugged. It was good for a youngster to fight for his convictions and for his rights. Even if he lost, the right kind of youngster wouldn't lose the former; and King felt grimly confident that he wouldn't lose the latter.

HE DREW back. Immediately the big man lunged forward again and swung with furious intent. This was going to be no contest of skill against weight. Neither man knew anything at all about boxing. It was going to be a contest of nothing more than give and take and give again; stamina and plain nerve. Well, the kid had an advantage in the former; the big business man was softer, older—though by no means too old to annihilate the younger one if he but got him right. As to nerve, well, the end would show.

Within the first minute the younger one went staggering and down from a ponderous smash on the side of his head. It was to the big man's credit that he took no advantage over the fallen opponent. The boy rose, shaking his head, and moved warily round. His elbow blocked another swing and he grunted as his own fist collided comfortably with the other's face.

After that it was hammer and tongs; toe to toe, slug, clinch, wrestle. The youngster went down again. He came up and bored in. The big man staggered from a neat punch in the middle of the face. He roared and hurled a barrage of swings at the other. The youngster stopped some; took some; gave a few. Wrestle, clinch, slug. Blood showed on both faces.

Whatever the big man's ideas had been about chastisement, this was a fight. It was crude, hopelessly inexpert, woefully

widespread legs and whistling thin discords through his teeth, nodded appreciatively. The conclusive factor of nerve was showing up. He was a good kid.

King beckoned the Hottentot, who with all the other camp boys stood gaping at the battle between their white masters.

"Make camp a hundred yards up the road; and quick-quick make hot water."

"*Bado kidogo, bwana.* It is a pity that the young *bwana* does not kick that other in the stomach as we do a mule that fights the halter."

"Away!" ordered King. "Hot water, and plenty of it."

The big man fell suddenly. The youngster stood drunkenly and dripped blood over him from a well battered nose. Fanshawe got up and bored in to clinch, push, grunt. Gone was his fierce rage that clamored for punishment. He was fighting, and he knew it.

So did the youngster. Ponderous swings came in every now and then that his inexpert elbows did not know how to block. His own blows were more frequent; but with each swing that cracked against the side of his head they were less effective. He went down again. And in a little while again. He rose each time more slowly. But still King nodded to himself. The important thing was that the boy rose.

It was when the youngster was shaky on his feet and dim eyed, weaving uncertainly on weak knees that King pushed his shoulder between the fighters.

"All right," he grunted to Fanshawe. "Your weight wins."

With one arm he supported the boy who pushed feebly to get past him. The big man's temper still held him. He was in the grip of a totally unaccustomed and enormous emotion. To fight, to beat, to batter, were the only impulses that he knew.

King pushed him off with an open hand against his chest.

"Snap out of it, big feller," he growled. "You win this lap. But I'll take a bet

The big man only stared at him owlishly; and then, like an ox that does not understand, he moved away. King led the youngster away.

"Come on, kid. You don't have to fight any more. You've done aplenty to that man—more than you or I will probably ever know. You've done him a heap of good. And, kid, you've done yourself proud. That was the best fight I ever saw lost."

IN THE CAMP which was already taking shape in the fast growing dusk under the skilled direction of the Hottentot and the gruff orders of the Masai, King led the youngster to warm water and advised him to strip clean and wash down.

"Nothing like a warm sponge to refresh you," he said. "And you're going to need it right soon."

Himself, he went to rummage for his medicine kit and find that most useful of all camp medicaments, surgeon's tape. He helped the youngster wash up his cuts and bruises and made neat patches with tape where necessary.

"You're a mess," he told him with deep appreciation. "I don't know whether you know it, young feller, but this has done you a heap of good, too. Stretch out now and take a rest while you have time."

He called the big Masai to him and issued a curious order.

"Those boys who are putting up the tent. Tell them to roll it up again. Pick two men who are strong, who can carry a tent and a little food. Tell them to eat their *potio* swiftly."

Then he lighted a pipe and chose a spot on the edge of the hill where he could sit hugging his knees and watch the last of the sun paint the clouds crimson and amber and pale green, and throw the hilltops *into* blue-black silhouette against the swiftly darkening gray. Such things stimulated thought; and he needed thought.

The Hottentot came and announced

feet and calling to Weston to up and get it while it was hot.

"Good Lord," the youngster mumbled. "I don't wanna eat. I'm so sore that I couldn't chew a mouthful."

"Come on, come on," said King. "You're going to need it. You've had a good and plenty beating up and you'll need your strength."

"I'll be all right in the morning, Mr. King; honest I will."

"In the morning," said King decisively, "you're going to be a long way from here. Time, young feller; it's time that's going to count. We need all the start we can get."

Weston groaned.

"Gosh, Mr. King. If that fellow's half as sore as I am he won't be starting for a week."

"Don't you fool yourself," said King. "If that man knew we were getting ahead, sore as he is, he'd heave himself up and come right on our tails. Don't ever make any mistake about Fanshawe, young feller, or any of his kind. He's all kinds of dog and he's swelled up so he can't see the little humans that run around about his feet. That's big business. But he's got the stick-to-it-iveness that put him up where he is; and he'll be hotfoot on our trail."

King called the Masai.

"Barounggo, I place a responsibility upon you. We go as soon as it is dark—Kaffa and the young *bwana* and I, and two strong men to carry tent and food. The rest stay here and make fires and noises of camp. The responsibility is that no fool of ours goes into that camp to smoke tobacco and to gossip the news of our going, and that no man from there comes here."

It was a large order to keep two groups of natives apart throughout a night; for Africans on *safari*, like animals, sleep fitfully and are restless; and gossip of the road is all the recreation that they know. But the Masai drew a line across the path with the point of his spear.

"It is an order," he said simply. "No man crosses that mark."

Half an hour later the little party stole out into the farther dark, leaving behind them the chatter of natives round bonfires; and beyond the fires, outlined in bronze highlights, the grim figure of the great Masai leaning motionless on his spear.

King was light of heart and full of glee at his strategy. "It's going to be tough going," he chuckled. "What with rocks and roots and all in the dark. But if we—if you, can keep going like the devil was after you, we'll reach the place where your ivory is by morning. I don't know how early Fanshawe will find out; but I guess he won't oversleep, and he'll kill his mules to come on. But we'll be at least half the day ahead of him."

Weston groaned, but clamped his teeth down on it.

"I'll do my damndest," he said.

King smiled in the dark. He was a good kid. And a stiff test of everything that he had—whether in a football game or in a race or in a fight or in just a forced march—was wonderfully good for the right kind of youngster.

"Might be the making of a regular outdoorsman of him," he muttered to himself, "and steal him away from that desk that his dad promises him."

And that, to King, was the epitome of human existence.

THEY won through this time, too. Late morning saw them in view of the first straggling huts of the hill chieftain's village. King was deeply seamed about the eyes and mouth, but his stride was as springy as at the start. The Hottentot, wizened, shrunken, too black for the grime to show, looked exactly as he had looked twenty years ago. Weston and the porters were exhausted. King gave the little man instructions.

"I go to see the Fitaurari. There is a place here where four tamarind trees make a good shade. Find it and make camp. Give each porter a dash of rum with his *potio*." And to Weston:

"I've got to go and make my official visit. You go on and rest up. I'll come along whenever I can."

The *gebbi*, the so-called palace of the Fitaurari, was a rambling cluster of forty or so round *tukuls* in various sizes and conditions of repair. They were grouped together on a hilltop and surrounded by a stockade. King knew the conventions. To the head man, or chief steward of the household, he gave an immediate present of money. That opened the way to hospitality. King was conducted to a dim, cool *tukul* and provided with water to wash in and strong black coffee.

Presently a slave brought flat pancakes of sour bread and a dish of furiously peppered stew. King was in a fever to get to the chief and get down to business. But here he was not the lordly white man in a country ruled by white men. He was a foreigner in the last independent kingdom of ancient Africa. It was an hour—and a joyful surprise at that—before the steward came to conduct him into the chief's presence.

The Fitaurari sat in what must have been a chair, but it was so draped with carpets that one could only guess. A gold embossed shield of rhinoceros hide with a long curved sword in a solid silver sheath and a spear hung on the carpeted wall behind him. These were the insignia of his rank. He was a man in vigorous old age, with white hair and flowing beard, and a keen, strong face.

"*Thena'yisth'a'l'enge*, may God give you health for my sake," he greeted King. "Give me joy by taking a seat, Amricani, and tell me the news of the road."

"I come as a poor man, Fitaurari," began King bluntly, "bringing no gift to recommend me; only promises."

The old general smiled.

"Yet this letter. The Jew has robbed me in many a business, yet never has he put pen to words that so compromise his judgment. Surely that is a recommendation. Tell me then these things that he guarantees will be true."

King told him the whole story from the beginning, in detail; his hopes, his fears, his suspicions, and his anxiety about what might now happen.

The old general heard him through, nodded slowly, smiling from time to time, nodded again.

"So the old wizard knew?" he murmured when King had at last finished. "I have thought that he knew these many years, but he has kept the silence of wisdom." He laughed a short, hard laugh. "Yet, *getha Amricani*, you have made a long journey in a great haste for no cause."

King's heart sank. If the old man were going to pretend that there was no such document, the argument would be endless. But the ex-general's eyes grew fierce.

"Never will I give up that paper to any Inglesi. Have I borne my banishment these eighteen years and have I grown old in the jungle here for the principle of that paper that now I shall surrender it?"

"Fitaurari," said King earnestly, "I don't know about the principle of that paper. Whether you are right or wrong is not my affair. But this thing is now a matter of money. There is enough in that business to make many men very rich. That man will offer you much money to buy it; more than you will believe."

"I am old," said the Fitaurari calmly. "I have lived. My son will have my many hundred miles of estate. He may not have so much money as you say; but by holding this paper, as I have held it these many years, I insure at least that he will be a chief amongst his own people, not a subject. Let your Amricani people do this work. I am well content."

"But, Fitaurari," King urged, "this is a paper that can give the whole work to the Inglesi without further talk. This man is a man of much power; he has brains, he has force of will. He will produce argument to show you that conditions have changed in the world; that the principle no longer exists; that it is only the business that he desires. He will persuade you."

The old chief laughed.

"I have grown old in my principle. I have heard these arguments given twenty years ago before the Lion, my Lord. Given by the Inglesi and by the Taliani and by the Russki and by the Ferenchi. Twenty years ago they bade me tell my king that no one of them desired any more land in Africa. And then they all went to war together and when it was finished they took all the land of the Germani who lost the war. I am proof against persuasion."

KING felt that the bigoted old man was rooted in his conviction of many years; but he knew what things had been done, what incredible cleverness had been brought to bear on business deals involving very much less money than this irrigation project.

"Fitaurari," he said, "You are proof. Good. Yet tell me how many men are there in your household who are proof against much money? How many men, for much money, would steal that paper? Do you think you could keep it hidden from all your household for one whole day? And for very much money—you know your own land, Fitaurari—how many men do you think would swiftly mix for you the black coffee which is the end? Who would then get the paper?"

The old man remained silent. Once his eyes grew fierce and he cast a backward glance at the weapons on the wall. King put the thought into words for him.

"Yes, but the penalty that the thief would pay would not bring back the paper."

The old man nodded somberly.

"What would you have me do with this dangerous thing?"

"Destroy it, Fitaurari," King urged. "While it exists it is a danger. Think. Have you a single means that will guarantee that it will not be stolen? Destroy it before it is too late."

The general of King Menelek shook his head vigorously. Almost reverently he quoted the law.

" 'The Seal of Menelek, Lion of Judah, King of Kings, the Chosen of God. He who shall dishonor it, his hand shall be cut off at the wrist; his land shall be taken from him and he shall be outcast.' "

"Then give it to me," said King boldly. "I place my hands in your hand and give you my word that I shall respect the seal."

The old man looked at him out of his fierce old eyes for a long time in a brooding silence. Then:

"Give it to you?" he murmured. "This paper which you say is worth so much money?"

"Worth much to the Inglesi," said King. "Worth nothing to me. If I could by airplane carry it to the Amricani company before the business is signed, they would pay money in order to keep it from the other man. Since it will take three weeks of travel to get to the capital, and by that time the business will be signed and finished, they may in their generosity give me a small present to avoid argument."

The ex-general nodded in understanding.

" 'When a battle has been won,' " he quoted, " 'the chief who comes up afterward receives no spoil.' But—" he voiced a doubt—"if you expect no payment from your own side, how do I know that you will not sell this paper to that man who will offer so much money?"

"Hell!" shouted King. "Fitaurari, my hand in yours and my word. Besides, as you are an Abyssinian and have your reasons, I am Amricani and have my reasons."

The old man nodded again. His burning eyes bored into King's. His head swayed rhythmically with his thoughts.

"And the Jew wrote that whatever you would tell me would be true. That is a good recommendation. Tell me truly then, Amricani, what will happen if this paper falls into the hands of this Inglesi who comes prepared to pay much money for it?"

For the moment King was tempted; but in the next moment he answered steadily:

"I can tell you only this, Fitaurari. If that Inglesi gets the paper my people will lose that work and his people will get it."

The old man brooded over that reply. Suddenly he became fierce. He shouted as though remembering an old battle cry.

"And I tell you, *getha Amricani*, as I told Menelek my king—but he would not believe me—I tell you that if that Inglesi gets the paper, my people will lose this land and his people will get it."

With a quick decision he clapped his hands. A very black slave appeared. The man appeared to be deaf, for the general took a long silver pin and scratched with it upon a board smeared with bees' wax. The man read and went into an inner room.

He came back with a cheap japanned tin box and knelt, holding it before his master. With torturing deliberation the old man hunted through an immense bunch of keys till he found a common stamped out thing that must have had a thousand duplicates in the land. He opened the box and rummaged through a collection of trash and folded papers.

King's heart stopped as the old man apparently didn't find the paper. Perhaps the coveted document had been stolen long ago. The old man, with maddening reminiscence, unfolded several crackling old papers and glanced through them, refreshing his memory as to their contents.

King's effort to control himself from manifesting eagerness and to keep an immobile face was immense. He pictured to himself the back trail with a furious man flogging a mule along the steep slope. How far back, was the excruciating question? But he forced himself to examine with great intentness a rent in his sleeve.

"Ah," exclaimed the old man suddenly. "Behold!"

After all this effort, all this mental anguish, it was a disappointingly unimportant looking little thing. An eight by ten oblong of parchment, stiff and brown with age and dirt.

THE OLD MAN lifted an eyebrow at the slave, who immediately disappeared. Slowly he unfolded the crackly skin, and King's heart jumped to recognize the close written maze of Ethiopic script and above it the great three-inch black seal of Menelek, with the king's own inexpert initials scrawled across it. The old man read it carefully through, pondering long thoughts of the dead past. King's jaw muscles showed how his teeth bit upon each other.

The old warrior ruminated, looking at King from under shaggy white brows.

"A paper worth much money, you say? Hm-mm!" Then with an access of fierceness once more, "But *I* say, a paper worth the lives of many Abyssinian men! Take it, Amricani, and guard it with your head. Let your Amricani people do this work; so that it is at last done and so that the importunities of those others come at last to an end."

King took first the hand that held the portentous document.

"Fituarari, you do me a favor that I can not—"

But the old man cut him short.

"Tscha-tscha! It is not so; I do nothing for you. I do a favor to Abyssinia—and to myself. For when that man comes with his arguments and with his money and with his importunities, I shall be able to take oath by the head of Menelek that I have no such document. And no other man of my people knows of this thing; for those who knew have long ago died."

And at that evasion the old man chuckled. It was just that form of specious truth that appeals so strongly to the Oriental in the complex Abyssinian heredity.

"And so when my servants accept bribes to search out and steal that which I have not, the only loss will be to the briber."

The logical sequence of that thought followed through. The old man laid his hand on King's arm.

"And you—will you expect me to pro-

tect you with a guard of my soldiers from that man who will do so much to gain possession of that paper?"

King laughed his hard little laugh.

"I've been protecting myself all around Africa pretty successfully for many years, Fitaurari. But I don't like trouble when I can duck out of it. I offer a plan which will at least cloud the question in uncertainty. No man knows, you say, that you have such a paper?"

"But it is already being talked throughout my household that a white man has come to ask for something."

"Good. Give me, therefore, something. Give me this, Fitaurari. I have a young man, a boy, who has foolishly bought a map from Petropoulides the Greek showing the location of those elephant teeth that his cousin buried before he died."

"Ah, a map?" The old man's face clouded in angry reminiscence. "I have often wondered where that fellow hid the things. He died; otherwise I would have exacted the tribute that the law stipulates—each right tooth for the king."

"Yes, I know the law," said King quickly. "But it is also the law that the trader or the hunter may pay the price of each tooth according to its weight and may keep the teeth. Therefore, Fitaurari —this is a good youngster, though lacking experience—I will pay the tribute of each right tooth in money. Do you, therefore, summon your secretary and instruct him to write out a permission for me to take up those teeth out of your village. And so will there be a reason for my coming."

The old chief shouted his sudden laughter and clapped King on both shoulders. He laughed until a coughing fit choked him. This was a subterfuge better even than the other. It capped the story and made a perfect alibi. Though nobody might believe the story in its entirety, it was on the face of it palpably true and the proof was forthcoming. And no man more than an Abyssinian loves to brazen out such a situation.

"Go, go!" the old man wheezed. "There will be no profit left for you in that ivory. But I have sworn to that obstinate Greek to collect the king's lawful tribute. I accept it as payment for the paper. Go, my friend. You are a man of my own heart. The permit will be sent to you."

AND SO KING came to his camp in the tamarind grove, jauntily; full of silent laughter. King very different from the man who had dealt so cleverly with the old general. The tent was set up. Weston had eaten and was rested.

"What!" shouted King. "Haven't you dug it up yet? My land, how'd you ever hold off that long?"

To which Weston replied only—"Hunh?"

"Man alive," said King. "Didn't your map say tamarind trees? Four of them in a rough square; the only ones in the whole village? Or didn't you know these were tamarind trees?"

"Good—good Lord! You mean to say —" the youngster's eyes popped wide— "you mean to say this is the place where— Golly, and I've been sitting here like—"

Gone was the pain of his bruises; forgotten the stiffness of his grueling journey.

"Lord almighty, where the heck is that map now?"

"D'you have to look it up?" derided King. "Gosh, at your age, young feller, I'd have been able to draw it by heart." And for that matter, so he could now. "Diagonal the trees, it said, didn't it? And dig at the point of intersection."

Weston rushed to look for string, mule rope, tent rope—anything. He limped from one tree to another—and never knew he was limping.

King squatted, hugging knees, looking on at it all through a screen of pipe smoke with a huge satisfaction.

"I think I've got the place," the youngster finally called. "This is where the lines cross to a hair."

Then King got up and joined him with a pretense at nonchalance. A shade of annoyance crossed his face.

"Shucks," he muttered. "Hate to overlook things like that. I've forgotten to bring along a digging tool. Never mind, a couple of hunting knives have dug up many a loot bigger'n this."

It was hard work digging in the stiff clay soil with hunting knives. But this was too absorbing a play to let the native servants do it all while one just watched. King sweated and scrabbled in the dirt with Weston, and whooped just as loud as the boy did when the first long, hard brown curve showed.

Man and boy, they scrambled with one another to scratch it out and bring it to the surface.

"Wow!" shouted King. "A forty-fiver! That's pretty good, young feller, as they go nowadays."

"I've got another," came the youngster's muffled voice, groping deep in the hole.

In another minute he wriggled his shoulders out and heaved up another slim shape. King shouted again.

Six tusks they exhumed in all; of a fair size and apparently of hard ivory; though that would have to be determined later. Then King, grubbing in the lower dirt with the last reluctant hope of the born treasure hunter, whooped again.

"Whee-ee, there's—I think there's another one."

Like a terrier he scratched, his head and shoulders deep in the hole, his long legs splayed out over the flat ground to balance himself. In a moment he came up. sand in his hair, one eye painfully screwed, but grinning delight through the other. His hands hugged a seventh long, shiny tusk.

Weston pushed him away in a frenzy and preempted the hole. Shortly his voice mumbled triumph. He threw the tusk out and dived back into the hole before King could get to it. This was the most intense excitement of his life. King sat back and let him win the most out of his thrill.

Ten tusks there turned out to be in all; the wily Greek had contrived to collect more than anybody knew. Like boys having unearthed the pirate's treasure the two men laid them out side by side in a shiny row and admired them. They grinned at each other through sand specked eyelashes, spitting grit from between their teeth and shaking sand from their necks. This was one of the times when the world was a good place to be in.

And in this position Fanshawe found them.

Disheveled, dirty, caked with sweat and dust, he had rushed down from the palace gates to prove the thing that he did not believe. He had not seen the Fitaurari yet. The old chief was exhausted, word had been sent out. He begged the visitor's indulgence; would he mind coming later in the afternoon? But the story was out that the earlier arrivals had come to get a permit to dig up buried ivory within the very confines of the village and were even now exhuming a vast treasure.

Like a charging bull Fanshawe thrust his way through the circle of gaping natives. And there the proofs of the incredible story stared him in the face. Long and curved and glistening brown in the sun.

Weston shouted his triumph. Having fought and lost, and won again, he was ready to forgive bygones.

"We beat you to it, Mr. Fanshawe. No hard feelings, I hope. Ain't they beauties, though?"

Fanshawe looked, spluttered, choked. Incoherent words burst from him.

"Is—is that what—was that what you came to get?"

King's steely eyes met his; but his wide mouth grinned beneath them.

"Well, what the devil else was all the scramble about?" he demanded; and then rising and confronting the man with an assumption of suspicion, "Sa-ay, what were you so hot after? What else is there around here?"

Fanshawe gave vent to a noise like the throat rattle of the wretched mule that had dropped dead under him in his mad race to get here. He turned, and battered his way through the crowd once more to insist upon seeing the Fitaurari and prov-

ing again the baffling thing that he refused to believe.

King grinned after him.

"Wonder what he thinks he can get out of the chief?" he asked ingenuously of Weston. "What I've seen of the old boy, he'll get damn poor satisfaction."

The Hottentot had to add his acute observation.

"What audience does that man hope to get in this land of Abyssinia, coming without a gift in his hand?"

"Make no mistake," King muttered half to himself. "That man has plenty force. Why should he not see the Fitaurari whom I saw without a gift?"

"Nay, *bwana*," said the little man. "Three pots of that food have we presented upon our arrival here, as an earnest of gifts to come with our caravan; and a female slave has already brought milk and a goat."

"Out!" shouted King. "Get out. Bush baboon, you disgrace me with your philanderings."

"Nay, *bwana*," the little man defended with an immense seriousness. "In this land of Abyssinia it is necessary to a white *bwana's* dignity that his servants have also their servants."

To which very truth there was no reply.

After that there remained only the question of division of the spoils. Weston was insistent upon his former proposition —fifty-fifty.

"Gosh, I owe it all to you, Mr. King. All I had was the map. I'd never have got here at all on my own. I can see now what a job it's been."

"Well," said King in fatherly manner. "there won't be any profit in that stuff at all if we split. And—I turned a little business with the chief there that'll about make me quits. I've had a hatful of fun out of it, kid; and that's worth quite a lot too, isn't it?"

"By golly, yes." Weston said. "Me, too. I've never had such a good time in my life. This—say, the way you do, Mr. King, this is living."

King's grin was pure beatitude.

"Take a tip, young feller. You'll get a lot more for that stuff in New York than you will here; and—maybe if you give your dad one of them whole he'll stake you to another trip."

To the youngster it was an inspiration.

"Gosh! You're dead right on that. And —I'll just have to have another trip after this. But—if you won't split— Say, you don't mind my asking what kind of business you put over, do you? I mean, do you honest to God make anything out of it?"

King's grin this time was free from all care. He lighted his pipe and puffed deeply.

"To tell you the truth," he explained. "It wasn't really any of my *damn* business. A matter of a little contract for Uncle Sam. As a matter of fact, by the time I can get it to that crowd, I don't expect they'll give me a whole lot more than a nice thank you. That's big business."

MASTER UNLIMITED

By LARRY O'CONNOR

"GRANT BARRETT? Make that rum swilling beachcomber master of our *Tillikum*? Never in this world!"

The watery blue eyes of Mr. Nathan Simpcoe, president and general manager of the Westward Steamship & Navigation Company, blinked combatively behind thick lenses as he slapped a pudgy hand upon the desk to emphasize his dictum.

"I am astounded that you should suggest such a thing, Brant," he continued. "You know what the man did with his last command, the *Sonora*. Got drunk and ran her ashore on Alki Point; and only a miracle that none of the four hundred souls aboard were lost. Moreover, he tried to shift the blame for that disaster on to our *Aleut*. Claimed that Captain Nordstrom was running full speed in thick weather without sounding proper signals. He's a liar, and a drunkard—and I will not have him!"

Jerry Brant, local agent for the company at this busy Alaskan port, shrugged his wide shoulders and turned a hand palm upward in an expressive gesture.

"The charge of drunkenness and negligence is not an unusual one when a master has lost a ship, Mr. Simpcoe," he said. "And these charges were surely

not substantiated in the *Sonora* affair, or the investigating board would not have let Captain Barrett off with a mere six months' suspension. MacLeod, who has the engine room on the *Tillikum* now, was aboard the *Sonora* at the time; and he swears that Barrett took the only possible means to avoid a disastrous collision and loss of life.

"Anyway, the *Tillikum* must sail in time to reach Prince Rupert by eight o'clock tomorrow morning. We carried Captain Anderson to hospital two hours ago, and they are operating on him now. Chief Mate Clannahan quit the *Tillikum* and went below on the *Admiral Rogers* yesterday. Second Mate Evans has no master's license. And the vessel can't sail without a master."

Mr. Simpcoe, since turning some of his profits as a highly successful stock broker to the purchase of control in this steamship company, had found much to criticize. The fearlessly independent attitude of the men in charge of the Alaskan agencies of his company had been particularly irritating to him. But this proposal to make Grant Barrett master of a Westward ship was, his expression indicated, simply intolerable.

Simpcoe possessed neither the taste nor the ability for conducting a maritime enterprise; but this position which his money had bought gave him a certain power in marine affairs, in the attainment of which he had fulfilled a purpose of long standing.

He stared disapprovingly at the wide office window, but saw nothing of the jostling crowd outside; for between his eyes and the window there floated a vision. A vision of the deep blue eyes and softly smiling lips of Alice Yorke. Alice Yorke, who had chosen to reject the even then successful stock broker, in favor of a youthful, gray eyed sea captain, who had yet to win his first command. Fifteen years had in no wise served to soften Nathan Simpcoe's resentment of that decision, nor his hatred for Grant Barrett.

Outside, a band blared vociferously; and a noisy holiday crowd surged and jostled up Front and Dock Streets. For three days Ketchikan had been entertaining the ball team and some two hundred of its enthusiastic supporters from the neighboring Canadian city of Prince Rupert. The return tickets of these visitors called for their transportation home by the Westward Steamship Company at the close of this day.

Simpcoe jerked his gaze from the window and again slapped the desk.

"I will not have that scoundrel aboard one of our vessels," he repeated. "You can hold these people here a couple of days, until the *Aleut* gets down from the north. Pay their hotel bills, if necessary. I'll wire Seattle for a master to come up and take the *Tillikum*."

Jerry shook his head.

"It's not the passengers," he said. "Though they might complicate matters. It's that Dominion Fish Company contract. You know how valuable their business is to us; and they have wired for immediate delivery of sixty thousand pounds of red salmon, in ice."

The weak eyes behind Mr. Simpcoe's polished lenses blinked helplessly at this.

"But—but can't we stall the Dominion people along for a couple of days on their delivery?" he suggested.

Jerry Brant smiled grimly.

"They would jump at a chance to cancel with us, now that the Red Band line have put a vessel on the Rupert run. And clause four of their contract provides for immediate cancellation in the event of our failure to make delivery at the Prince Rupert dock within twenty-four hours of our receipt of their order to ship. No, Mr. Simpcoe. I received their cable at 8:12 this morning; and by 8:12 tomorrow morning that salmon must be at the Prince Rupert dock or—goodby contract."

Simpcoe sat slumped in his chair, his plump fingers nervously folding and refolding a blotter. His voice had lost its pompousness and taken on a querulous note when he spoke again.

"The shipment must be made, of course," he said. "But this fellow, Bar-

rett—the man is a menace. Since his inadequate suspension has been lifted I have done everything in my power to prevent his obtaining another command; and certainly I shall not now put him in charge of one of our own ships. He's a drunken, disrespectful—uh—Bolshevik! Incompetent, insubordinate! Called me a—a—never mind. Get some one else—get any one else—to handle the *Tillikum* for this one voyage."

A ghost of laughter flickered in Jerry Brant's veiled eyes; but his voice and visage were sternly serious as he answered.

"Captain Barrett is licensed—both by our own service, and the British Board of Trade—to the command of 'any vessel on any ocean'; so he surely is not utterly incompetent. And—" he paused a moment before driving home this last nail in his argument— "he is the *only* master in this port with a ticket big enough to cover the *Tillikum*."

Mr. Simpcoe sighed and dropped the crumpled blotter into the waste basket.

"Very well," he snapped. "Since affairs have been allowed to get into this deplorable condition, I suppose there is nothing else to be done. But—" with a stiffening of his spine, and a sudden vicious intensity— "I shall make the trip to Rupert myself, to keep an eye on this drunken scoundrel; and I shall see to it that he leaves the ship the moment she is docked at Prince Rupert."

A louder blare from the band, instantly shut out again, signaled the opening and closing of the office door. Both men turned their faces toward the doorway, and the man who stood just inside.

A LITTLE above the medium height, he looked shorter because of his wide shoulders, and the square cut, double breasted serge that he wore. His face was clean shaven, and darkly red from the winds and brine of many seas. Deep lines from the nostrils of his hawk-like nose to the corners of his well cut mouth lent a suggestion of grimness to his naturally firm lips. Thousands of tiny wrinkles in the deep eye sockets marked him as one who had peered long and intently at far horizons. The steel-gray eyes looked out steadily from beneath dark, jutting brows. The man might have been forty-five years old; he actually was eight years less than that.

Jerry Brant flashed his pleasant smile and scrambled hastily to his feet.

"Come in, Captain Barrett," he called. "Come back and sit down. We were just waiting for you."

Grant Barrett shook the water from his worn officer's ulster, and came toward them with quick, firm strides. There was no suggestion of the sailor's roll in his carriage; yet there emanated from him a subtle aura of the quarterdeck; the unmistakable air of one accustomed to command.

Jerry thrust forward the chair from which he had just risen and draped his own lanky form across a tall office stool.

"You have met Mr. Simpcoe, I think, Captain," he said.

To this, Mr. Simpcoe vouchsafed a flickering glance, a half nod, and a disapproving "Hrrumph!"

Barrett turned his ulster inside out, tossed it over the chair back, and seated himself; one strong hand and forearm resting upon the desk. There was a sardonic gleam in the gray eyes that peered sharply for a moment at Simpcoe's averted face; but his voice was quietly noncommittal as he spoke.

"Yes; we've crossed hawsers somewhere, I believe."

He pushed up the vizor of his service cap and turned toward Jerry with the air of one who dismisses a subject of no possible importance.

There was an air of unshakable steadiness in every movement and feature of the man. In the steely eyes that peered, unwinking, from beneath their strong brows; in the large knuckled hand which lay without hint of movement upon the desk-top; in the two feet, planted flat and solidly upon the floor; in every line of the motionless, upright figure. A rock-like, granite steadiness.

Too rock-like, Jerry Brant thought, as he probed it with friendly, discerning eyes. The sort of steadiness that is only maintained by the constant exercise of an iron will. Jerry reached hastily into a pocket and hauled forth a crumpled package of cigarets.

"Smoke, Captain?" he said.

Barrett reached eagerly for the packet and an amused twinkle of comprehension grew in the steel-gray eyes as they met the friendly, understanding gaze of the brown ones. But the hand whose stub nailed thumb presently flicked a match into flame and applied it to the paper tube had in no wise relaxed its steadiness.

Grant Barrett had been well under way on a "bender" when Jerry Brant's messenger found him, two hours before. A hot bath, a barber, and the corner drug store had combined to restore him to his present state of painful sobriety. But his steadiness of hand and eye was an achievement which he guarded with an unceasing vigilance. He inhaled deeply, grateful for the tobacco which gave him an excuse for movement without hinting at nervousness.

"You sent for me, Mr. Brant?" he said.

"To get you to help us out of a hole, if you will, Captain," Jerry answered. "Captain Anderson is in hospital, and we have a shipment which must be landed in Prince Rupert by eight o'clock tomorrow morning. Can we persuade you to take the *Tillikum* down for us?"

The gray eyes and the brown met and held steadily for a long moment. Then Barrett nodded.

"I'll take her down. Glad to," he said bruskly.

"That's fine," said Jerry. "Here are the ship's papers, and your manifest. You will attend to the change of master, and clear in time to sail at seven o'clock this evening. You'll have two hundred and four passengers, and this sixty thousand pounds of iced fish. And for heaven's sake, Captain, have that fish at the Rupert dock before 8:12 tomorrow morning."

"That should be easy enough," Barrett returned. "The *Tillikum* will do about twelve knots, I think?"

"Twelve is her normal speed," Jerry answered. "The chief says she will do fifteen at a pinch, but he won't answer for the consequences."

"That gives us plenty of margin," Barrett said confidently. "I'll have docked well before four o'clock—barring acts of God, or the misbehavior of Diesel engines."

"You can pretty well discount the latter hazard, Captain," Jerry retorted. "You've got Jock MacLeod in the engine room."

THE *TILLIKUM'S* whistle was sounding its fifteen minute warning when Captain Grant Barrett ran briskly up the gangplank, and hurried to the master's stateroom. The captain's quarters on the ship were located on the bridge deck, directly aft of the chartroom; and connected, through that room, with the wheelhouse.

Most of Captain Anderson's personal effects had been left aboard; and Barrett busied himself with such slight rearrangement of these as was necessary to make room for the few things he had brought with him. Snapping open the door of the cubby locker, he paused and, with head on one side, surveyed with a grim smile an array of three tall glasses, and a slender, greenish bottle wearing an unbroken seal and a golden, star spangled label.

Every nerve in Grant Barrett's body was crying out to him that he needed a drink; and, with his eyes on that golden label, he hesitated. Suddenly the picture of his dead wife came to him—his wife whose death four years before had left Grant Barrett's life a hollow, aching void. Only a stubborn pride in his work remained to him; and for a year now he had had no work. The anodyne of the bottle might lend him the courage to keep on living; but it could never numb the poignant pangs of memory. He

shook his head decisively and snapped shut the door on temptation.

"Not yet," he murmured. "Not yet."

Passing through the chartroom he came into the wheelhouse, and nodded carelessly to the young quartermaster who lounged against the wheel. A glance a the softly glowing face of the wheelhouse clock told him that it lacked but one minute of the sailing hour, and he stepped briskly out upon the bridge.

A heavy fog had shut down on Tongass Narrows; so woolly-thick that the movements of men on the forecastle head were blurred and indistinct from the bridge.

The main deck rail was lined with the crowd of returning Canadians. Laughing, shouting gay goodbys, and boisterous promises of future entertainment in their city—"where a spot of liquor is not a criminal offense, old chap!" Not one of that gay crowd gave a serious thought to the dense fog enfolding them; nor to the dangers attendant upon the blind navigation of these narrow, treacherous, inside channels.

Over Captain Grant Barrett, as he leaned on the bridge rail above them, there surged with renewed force the realization —never long absent from the heart of any master mariner—that all of these lives were in his keeping. And as his eyes narrowed upon the thick shroud that hemmed them in, he was conscious of a dry tightening in his throat, and a damp coldness at the armpits. It was in just such a fog as this that he had last trod the bridge of the *Sonora*. His wide shoulders took on a squarer set, and his voice was firm and assured as he leaned to address the mate.

"All set, Mr. Evans? Then take in the plank."

As the plank came rattling up he nodded to the quartermaster, who reached up and gave a quick tug at the whistle cord. Then, swinging the *Tillikum* on her spring line, he sent her sliding out into the stream with her engines going at half speed astern.

Standing with feet widespread, he watched the brilliant dock lights swiftly dim and blur as the fog shut down to blanket them. When they had faded to a vague, rosy glow, he spun the telegraph to "stop," and then to "half speed ahead," and addressed the helmsman:

"Port your helm," he said. "Lay her east by south a half south, and hold her there."

"East b' sou' a half sou'—and steady, sir," the man repeated; the vessel's head swung slowly, steadied, and she surged ahead on her course.

With her whistle booming at measured intervals, the motorship *Tillikum*, Barrett, master, had begun a strange and memorable voyage.

Grant Barrett stood with shoulders hunched, peering with narrowed eyes and impassive face into the opaque, white curtain against which they plunged. He was holding that impassive pose only by a conscious effort. The hands thrust into his coat pockets were doubled into tight fists. Chilly beads of sweat drew cold fingers down across his ribs. The nerve centers at the small of his back twitched and crawled and sent waves of weakness up his stiffly erect spine. His jaw muscles ached from the tensity of their clamping; and he found himself swallowing repeatedly to allay the burning tightness in his throat.

"Damn the fog!" he swore; and wondered if "it" had got him, at last.

Many an airman has come through a bad crash with a sound body, but shattered nerves. Many a jockey, spilled at the turn, has thereafter found himself unable to nip through and take the rail when the narrow opening showed. And many an able skipper has found, after shipwreck or collision in fog, that "it" has got him. And for "it" there is no cure.

The dull red gleam of Idaho Rock float light loomed close to port, and Barrett knew that he had passed safely between Idaho and California rocks; though the black buoy marking the latter was invisible.

"Make it east by south," he said; and strode to the starboard wing of the bridge

to watch for the white flash of the gas buoy on Potter Rock.

A gas boat hooted dismally down Nicholl's Passage; but changed her course to pass astern of the warning bass roar of the *Tillikum*. Second Mate Williams came up to the bridge, greeting his commander with a cheerful grin.

"A little thick, I'd say, sir," he cried.

"As pea soup," growled Barrett. "But it won't last long; there's a wind building in the southwest."

The *Tillikum* ploughed ahead at a dogged eight knots. Nine minutes from Idaho Rock, and a pale flare split the white curtain close ahead and a little to port. It came again, and Barrett whirled to the quartermaster.

"Hard a-starboard!" he roared; and breathed a sigh of relief as the vessel answered, and Potter Rock buoy slid by —a scant fifty feet off their starboard rail.

He leaned heavily against the bridge rail, and stubbornly fought down a sudden weakness in his knees. His lips felt strangely stiff and wooden as he forced them to say, quietly—

"Steady; make it east, three-eighths south."

A devil of nervousness and indecision had him by the throat, and he took to pacing restlessly from wing to wing of the bridge. Pausing beside young Williams in the port wing, he spoke jerkily:

"Hell of a tide here. Another minute, and we'd have been square atop of Potter Rock, on a course that should have carried us a good three hundred feet to southward of it."

"Aye; these full moon tides are always the devil to gage in this channel, sir," the youngster agreed carelessly.

THE FOG WRAPPED minutes dragged away, and Barrett's nervousness mounted with each passing one. Surreptitiously, he scrubbed the clammy moisture from his palms against the insides of his pockets. Would they clear Cutter Rocks? Had he made too great an allowance for the side-set of this swirling tide? He found himself straining expectantly for the first cry of alarm from the lookout in the bows; and bracing himself unconsciously for the lurching grind of sharp fanged rock under the forefoot.

He blew into the voice tube; and when a thick, Scotch burr came up, mingled with the roar of the engines, he said:

"You, Mac? All right. It's thick as mush up here, and I just wanted to be sure you were standing by down there, yourself."

He turned from the tube, to find the wide eyes of young Williams turned toward him. They were quickly averted; but even in the semi-darkness he fancied he had caught a speculative gleam of appraisal in that wide eyed stare. Damnation! Was he betraying his weakness to the fearless eyes of this slender kid? He must be more careful.

Silently, he fought for strength; and suddenly there swam before his eyes the vision of that cubby locker, with its tall green bottle of cognac. One drink, he thought—just one small drink . . . The lean jaw set stubbornly and, deliberately, he turned his back upon the chartroom door.

"Not yet," he muttered. "Not yet."

A gray, skeleton form broke the milky veil to starboard, a faint gleam flickering at its top. Three seconds, and the flicker came again.

"Spire Island light abeam to starboard, sir," came the cool voice of young Williams.

"Close; too close by a quarter mile," Barrett muttered.

Swiftly his mind ran over his position, and the probable set of the conflicting currents at this point. He should be nearly clear of the strong side-set from George and Carroll Inlets now; and the current out of Thorne Arm ought to be pretty well deflected by the shoulder of Bold Island at this stage. He was a quarter mile—perhaps a bit more—to southward of the regular steamship channel at Spire Island.

"East—southeast, a half east," he said

to the helmsman. And, smilingly, to Williams, "You might whistle a love song to hurry that wind along, Mister!"

The boy chuckled, and whistled a few soft bars of "La Paloma." But his eyes were fixed upon Barrett's wide shoulders as they swung away to the opposite wing of the bridge; and there was a puzzled light in their depths.

The *Tillikum* shouldered sturdily ahead; the only sounds now being the rustle of water under her forefoot, and the faint strains of a phonograph seeping up from the social hall. Twenty-two minutes from Spire Island a mellow "bong" pealed out from the white silence to port.

"Angle Point, and about the right distance off," Barrett said. "Make it east one-eighth south." To Williams he added, "That may carry us a little close in to Hog Rocks, but it should keep us out of the track of that fellow ahead there."

Somewhere in the murk ahead a steamer—a big one, by the sound—was bellowing hoarse but irregular warning. Barrett found that nervous tension—which, for a time, he had fought off—returning with renewed force. First Mate Evans climbed to the bridge.

"All snug on deck, sir," he reported. "Shall I take her for a bit, now?"

Barrett was straining with eyes and ears against the fog wall. That infernal steamer seemed to be everywhere at once; and, strive as he would, he could not check off her course from the irregular blasts of her bellowing whistle. To Evans' question he made an impatient gesture of dissent.

"I'd rather you stood by for'ard with the lookout, Mr. Evans," he said. "At least until we get this fellow located."

To himself, his voice had sounded sharp and jerky, with a high, nervous note. He wondered if Evans had noticed it. His agreement had been prompt and respectful enough; but Barrett thought his keen blue eyes had held a half amused light of comprehension as he turned toward the bridge ladder.

Well, he *was* nervous; and so would these two cubs be, if they had any sense.

THAT bellowing whistle was nearer now; but as maddeningly hard to place as it had been before. One moment it sounded well off to port; the next, it seemed to blare out right across their bows. And the irregularity of the damned thing! Could there be *two* vessels out there in that murk, blaring with the same voice?

He stopped beside young Williams.

"What do you make of it, Mr. Williams?" he asked. "Two ships out there, do you think? Or just a freak of sound, eh?"

There was no disguising his nervousness and anxiety now. The second mate spoke calmly from the wisdom of his twenty-two years.

"No chance that there's two of 'em whistles exactly alike, sir," he said. "This fog plays funny tricks with sounds, sometimes; but I think this bird is passing well outside us."

He spoke respectfully enough; but his voice carried a soothing, tolerant note which Barrett's sensitive nerves were quick to detect. Oh, yes; he was making a fine spectacle of himself in the eyes of these young officers of his! They'd be outwardly respectful, yes. With the same sort of respect that they would lend to the vagaries of a mildly insane old man—or old woman. Old woman was more like it! He lashed himself mentally; but his frayed nerves refused to come to order.

An insistent inner voice kept repeating that there was danger out ahead there; definite, imminent danger, right before his bows. Once he would have known this for a hunch—that blessed sixth sense which has saved more than one vessel for a "lucky" mariner. But now he recognized it for what it was—the wild clamoring of shattered nerves; the desperate, uncontrollable effort of a fear sick brain to avoid the repetition of a disaster that had wracked it in the past. A violent trembling seized him; and, fight as he would, he could not banish the ghostly specter of that tall ship, rushing down upon him out of the fog veil off Alki Point.

This would not do. A little more, and —to avoid an imaginary collision with a phantom ship—he would be giving the order that would send this proud vessel under his feet veering to destruction on the knobby spine of Hog Rocks. He clicked his teeth decisively, and spoke in a low, tense voice to Williams.

"She's yours for a minute, Mister," he said. And wheeled abruptly to the chart-room door.

He whisked the slender bottle of cognac and one of the tall glasses from the cubby, and with one quick twist of his knobby fingers broke the seal and removed the glass stopper from the bottle. With a steady hand he poured a full three fingers into the thin glass, and with one motion tossed it off.

A moment longer he stood, in thoughtful contemplation of the dark bottle in his hand. Then, with a bitter smile twisting at his thin lips, he replaced the stopper, and gently returned bottle and glass to their place.

A warm glow, beginning at the pit of his stomach, swept swiftly outward to pervade his entire body; and as it reached his frazzled nerves they came clicking smartly back to normal with all the precision of a newly oiled machine. An eager, confident light flickered and grew in the steel-gray eyes; and over him swept the sudden, certain knowledge that he, Grant Barrett, could step back out on that bridge and take command with all the ability and decision that had ever been his. That he not only could, but must.

"Great Neptune's beard," he murmured softly, "I must have *needed* a drink!"

He came back to the bridge with a firm, buoyant tread, and all of his old time readiness to meet with hazardous circumstance, and bend it to his will. The steamer's whistle roared again; this time quite definitely to port, and almost abeam.

"There!" young Williams ejaculated. "She's surely in the clear this time—thank the Lord!"

The obvious note of relief in his voice made it quite apparent that these few minutes of sole responsibility had made certain inroads upon even his youthful nerves.

Evans' voice called out from the bows—

"Think I picked up a blinker almost dead ahead, sir!"

"That will be Hog Rock light, and we're too close in," Barrett said. "Starboard a bit; we'll stand out a half mile."

The nose of the *Tillukum* swung obediently to port; was still swinging, in fact, when the silence was blasted by the deafening, nerve shattering roar of a steamer's whistle; coming, apparently, from right above their heads. The wheelhouse windows rattled to the blast, and from forward came the voice of Chief Mate Evans, screaming:

"Back her! Back her, for God's sake!"

Out of the blank wall into which they had a moment before been headed, but to starboard of them now, reared the high black bows and murderous sharp stem of a steam liner, rushing down to strike them just forward of midships.

Grant Barrett acted with incredible speed. In one whirling flash of movement he had thrust the telegraph to "Full Speed Ahead," grasped the wheel, and had it spinning, even as he snapped "Hard a-port" into the ear of the paralyzed helmsman.

The instant response of the engines proved that MacLeod had been keenly alert at his post. To their quickened beat, and the hard thrust of her rudder, the head of the *Tillikum* swung rapidly up to starboard, while her stern slid even more swiftly off to port.

"Steady; hard a-starboard, now," came Barrett's quiet voice.

The liner's crew were alive to the danger now; and the frenzied clatter of her steam steering gear came clearly to the ears of those aboard the *Tillikum*.

In a space of seconds the danger was over, and the two ships were rushing past each other. The swinging sterns of the two vessels met with a gentle, glancing thrust as they parted company.

In the social hall a handsome youngster

stumbled, lost step, and laughingly apologized to his dancing partner. In the smoking room a sea wise traveler jerked his startled gaze from the contemplation of a bridge hand, and met the knowing look of another of his tribe, who had just clipped the end from a cigar. For a moment they poised, tense and listening; and then, as nothing further occurred, grinned rather sheepishly.

"Log, I fancy," said the one; and applied a jeweled lighter to his cigar.

On deck, Chief Mate Evans came slowly aft to the bridge ladder, up which he hoisted his stocky form. He was grinning weakly; but there was a light of whole souled admiration in his bright blue eyes.

"By golly, sir, that was close!" he said huskily. "And if I had had the bridge, we would all be sitting in the water right now! You won't mind, will you, Captain, if I say that you think and act about four hundred times faster than any other man I ever saw?"

Barrett chuckled, and gave the arm of his stocky chief officer an understanding grip. A warm glow of thankfulness was pulsing at his heart. That *had* been a hunch, after all! "It" hadn't got him—yet.

"Those things get to be sort of instinctive on the bridge," he said. "I expect I'd have thrown a fit if I had been up there where you were."

THEY picked up Twin Islands by the echo; and a little later the dismal wail of the Mary Island fog horn told them that they had the lighthouse there abeam.

"A long course now, with nothing in our way after we clear Black Rock," Barrett said cheerfully. "We'll make it southeast, a half east, and try to pick up the Black Rock light. She is all yours, Mr. Evans. Call me if you fail to make Black Rock."

He had no desire to leave the bridge as yet; but he knew that this display of confidence in his chief officer would please that young man immensely.

He was idly leafing through a battered copy of Bowditch, when the beat of the engines dropped to "dead slow," and Evans came rapping at his stateroom door.

"No sign of Black Rock, sir," the mate reported. "But there's a southwest breeze stirring, and the fog is thinning a bit, in spots."

The southwest wind that he had prophesied was, indeed, rising, he observed as he followed Evans' stocky figure out on to the bridge. The slow, gentle swell, sweeping in past Duke Island from the open Pacific, was increasing in force; and the surface of the water was already deeply ruffled by the intermittent passage of swift, violent gusts and catspaws. The opaque curtain of fog swirled and split before these irregular gusts, momentarily extending visibility several hundred feet.

"Forty-five minutes from Mary Island light, sir," Evans said. "Black Rock light should be right abeam."

"I'd like to pick it up," Barrett answered, "for this tide is running hog wild tonight."

A moment longer he stood, staring fixedly into the white blankness over the port rail; then he turned and spoke with crisp decision.

"Keep a good lookout for'ard, Mr. Evans. We will stand inshore under a slow bell until we get a departure."

"Shall I keep the lead going, sir?" Evans queried.

"No use," was the answer. "There's ninety fathoms right up to the rock on this side. If we don't sight it in ten minutes, going dead slow, we will stop and try the lead."

The chief mate hurried forward, and Barrett spoke to the quartermaster.

"Lay her northeast, a quarter north," he said.

Slowly, her throttled engines barely giving her steerage way, the nose of the *Tillikum* swung about at right angles to her former course. Wedged into a corner of the bridge rail, Grant Barrett watched her swing, while he weighed the probabilities.

Forty-five minutes, at eight knots; and another five minutes dead slow. Yes; that should put the rock abeam, even bucking the thrust of the last of the rising tide. The course he had given should have taken them a half mile outside Black Rock; but it was impossible to foresee and estimate the vagaries of such a mad tide as was running in Revilla Gigedo Channel this night. It might have set them anywhere as they drew across the mouths of Behm Canal and Boca de Quadra.

Poised, tense and expectant, every nerve keyed to an instant readiness for action, he hunched wide shoulders against the fog, and seemed to seek, by sheer power of will, to thrust aside that impenetrable curtain.

"Northeast, a quarter north she is, sir," came the voice of the quartermaster.

Simultaneously, to Barrett there came that prickling of the scalp which presaged an unseen danger. Instantly, for no apparent reason, he had twisted the handle of the telegraph to "stop," and on to "half speed astern;" then, as the *Tillikum* lost way and surged backward, to "stop" again.

"Do you hear breakers, Mr. Evans?" he called.

Before Evans could answer, a sudden violent gust came sweeping up out of the southwest. Before it, the fog veil eddied and broke; and there, right before their bows, loomed the dark, forbidding bulk of Black Rock; the white painted steel skeleton of its light tower rising from its top. The light was not burning.

Barrett rang the engines to "half speed ahead" again, and the *Tillikum* turned on her heel and headed away, southeast, one eighth east.

"Bad business, that light being out on a night like this," Evans said, as he came back up the ladder.

Barrett remained on the bridge. He was wide awake, and Evans had also disclaimed all desire for sleep. So they lounged together in the port wing, exchanging an occasional word, and listening to the sibilant rush of the sea under the *Tillikum's* sturdy forefoot.

EIGHT bells were struck, and new men came to relieve the wheel and lookout. Presently the groan of a fog horn off to port warned them that Tree Point lighthouse was abeam, and the course was altered for Holliday Island.

A considerable swell was running now, and the *Tillikum* tossed her head restively, sending an occasional shower of spray back over the bridge. The catspaws came with greater force and frequency; but the mantle of fog still held.

"Listen to that fellow come, will you!" Barrett exclaimed.

The deep, sonorous note of a steamer's whistle sounded at measured intervals from the blank void ahead. Well inside their own course, but changing bearings with a rapidity which told that her commander held ideas of his own as to what constituted a "moderate speed in thick weather."

"Doing twenty knots, if I'm any judge," Barrett observed. "And none too far off the beach, either."

"That will be one of the big Prince boats," Evans said. "They are hogs for speed, and they have recently laid out a new set of courses which keeps them out of the regular steamer lanes, and gives them a chance to strut it."

He harkened a moment to that sonorous blast, and added:

"Their new G. M.—Collingwood, I think his name is—is up here now; so they're highballing it harder than ever. 'Run 'em full speed, or drop the hook,' he says. Claims that eight knots is too fast for a vessel that size to stop quickly; and not half fast enough to make her mind her helm smartly."

"He's more than half right, at that," Barrett answered absently. With keenly attentive ear he was following the course of the other vessel.

The deep toned whistle rapidly approached, drew abeam, and as swiftly receded. By the bridge compass Barrett bent and carefully mapped her course. As though her keel were guided by some unseen, transit lined groove, she swept

onward, took a departure from the Tree Point horn, changed course, and plunged ahead with undiminished speed.

Still Barrett bent over the compass; methodically checking and rechecking this new course. His face, in the faint glow of the binnacle, looked lined and harsh. Finally he grunted and, going to the chartroom, busied himself with the dividers and parallel rules. After five minutes of this he snapped out the chartroom lights, and returned to the bridge.

"How far off Tree Point does this new course of the Prince line lay, Mr. Evans?" he asked.

"A half mile inside the regular lane, Cap'n; that would be a mile off the light."

"Then that lad yonder is heading hell bent into trouble, or I'm a Dutchman," Barrett said. "I'll gamble he was less than half that distance off the point when he changed course. This tide has tricked him, and he is headed now squarely on Black Rock—and the Black Rock light is not burning!"

"The devil!"

"Aye, the devil—at twenty knots," Barrett agreed gravely. "You had best call Sparks and tell him to stand by to pick up a distress call."

They were off Lord Rocks when the call came. Sparks came flying to the bridge, his headset dangling over one shoulder.

"The *Prince Augustus!*" he grasped. "Don't know how you knew, sir—but she's just piled hard and fast on White Reef! Bad, her man says!"

"Hard a-port!" Barrett said. And to Sparks, "Tell them we'll be alongside in less than two hours."

He stepped to the voice tube.

"Tear them open, Mac!" he called. "There's a steamer ashore on White Reef."

Immediately the *Tillikum's* ancient Diesels awoke on a rising note which mounted until her entire hull had taken on a thunderous vibration, and the wheelhouse windows rattled in their frames. Barrett turned from the tube, to find that Evans had straightened the vessel out on her new course.

"White Reef!" the chief mate burst out. "How in thunder did they get way in there from the south'ard, sir?"

"Ran right inside Black Rock," Barrett answered. "Tide was in, so they passed over the two fathom spot, and hooked the southerly tip of the reef. The old *Queen* pulled the same stunt years ago, before there was a light on Black Rock."

There was a scrambling rush at the bridge ladder; and when a clawing hand pawed at his arm Barrett turned to face a highly excited Mr. Simpcoe.

"Have you gone crazy, Captain?" Simpcoe shrilled. "Or are you merely drunk again? Don't you know that you have turned completely around?"

"We've just had a distress call," Barrett said, quietly. "The *Prince Augustus* is stranded on White Reef, and we are going to her assistance."

"The *Prince Augustus!*" Simpcoe squeaked. "What have we to do with the *Prince Augustus?* They have lifeboats, haven't they? You attend to your business, and let them look to themselves!"

"It is my business to lend such aid as I may to any vessel in distress," Barrett told him sternly. "There are more than three hundred souls on that ship, and a southwest gale springing up."

"It is your business to guard your owners' interests, and to obey their orders at all times. It is vital that this ship be in Prince Rupert by eight o'clock this morning, and I order you to turn about and proceed there at once. I *order* it, do you hear? I order it!" Simpcoe was fairly screaming as he concluded.

Grant Barrett took the man's flabby shoulders between his bony hands, and bent his face close as he spoke with quiet intensity.

"Listen, little man," he said. "In port you are almighty, so far as this line of packets is concerned. But here you are just another passenger, and I am giving the orders. Now, take yourself

off my bridge; and make no further disturbance, or I shall have you locked in your stateroom until we make port."

He thrust him away, and Simpcoe staggered backward, waving his hands and sputtering. He had caught the taint of that three fingers of cognac on Barrett's breath.

"Drunk!" he raved. "Drunk, of course! Oh, I've watched you blunder and fumble and endanger this vessel a dozen times tonight by your incompetence; and I've held my peace. But this is too much!"

HE WHIRLED toward Chief Mate Evans, who was regarding him with the kind of mild wonder that one might bestow upon a new species of toad, and pointed a trembling finger at Barrett.

"Arrest that man, Mr. Mate!" he cried. "Put him in irons, and take this vessel to Prince Rupert. Immediately, do you hear? Immediately! I am the president of this company, and I will uphold your action."

Simpcoe was puffing and blowing with agitation. Mr. Evans grinned widely and addressed his commander.

"Shall I do something with this—porpoise, sir?" he asked.

"Put him in his stateroom, and see that he is kept there until we dock," Barrett replied. "If you have to knock him stiff in order to keep him quiet, you have my authority to do so."

Mr. Simpcoe was fairly frothing with rage. At the break of the bridge rail he turned and shook a pudgy fist at the impassive figure of the *Tillikum's* master.

"I'll break you for this, Barrett!" he screamed. "I'll hound you off the Pacific coast! You—you beachcomber! You ruffian! I'll have you in jail! I'll—"

"Go into your dance," said Mr. Evans; and pushed him down the ladder.

Mr. Simpcoe's career as stock broker had taught him nothing of the meaning of loyalty, or the traditions of the sea. Hence, on their way to his stateroom, he spoke persuasively of the many advantages that might accrue to a young mate who exhibited a proper respect for his owner's interests. He even proffered a round sum in cash, if Mr. Evans would only listen to reason and snatch command from "that drunken rowdy."

The chief mate said not a word; but thrust his prisoner through the stateroom door and followed closely on his heels. In that narrow room his scowling, square jawed face looked suddenly very ugly indeed to Nathan Simpcoe.

"Now, lizard," Evans snarled, "get this! There is just one man on this packet can give me orders, or anything else; and he's up there on the bridge. And if you don't think I'll obey his order to knock you stiff, just try unstoppering your jaw tackle once more before we hit the dock!"

To Simpcoe there came the realization that he was miles from the nearest policeman. That he might be hurt; yes—might even be killed here in this narrow stateroom, with not a soul to lend him aid. He cowered, speechless, in a corner, his pudgy hands fluttering fearfully before his face. Nor felt anything other than relief when the key grated in his lock from the outside.

First Mate Evans shoved the stateroom key deep down in his trousers pocket, and his wide mouth twisted in a wry smile.

"There goes my job," he muttered. "But who in hell wants to work for a toad!"

The wind was rising in earnest now; and the fog bank swirled away before it to disclose the hissing, racing whitecaps of an angry sea. The tide had turned, and was ebbing now with growing force.

"This is going to make a dirty tide rip there at the reef," Barrett said.

"And a sweet job for the lifeboats!" Evans appended.

Young Williams joined them, a glitter of excitement in his wide eyes.

"Boats all stripped and ready for launching, sir," he reported. "And all hands standing by."

They rounded Black Rock, and headed

in for the gleaming cluster of lights that marked the position of the stranded ship.

The *Prince Augustus* was in sorry straits. Striking the southern extremity of the reef at twenty knots, she had launched her full length upon those hungry rocks. The white, shell coated fangs had ripped her false bottom from stem to stern, and pierced her bilge in a score of places. She was upright as yet, almost on an even keel; upheld to a semblance of life by the very teeth that had been the death of her.

The early Alaskan dawn was beginning to break as Grant Barrett wedged himself in the port wing, and trained his glasses on the doomed vessel. The *Augustus* had struck on the very tip of the reef, which rose abruptly almost to the surface of the water at her starboard rail. The thick black oil from her ruptured bottom had spread over a wide area to leeward about the reef. A vicious tide rip raged to windward of her. Steep, combing seas rose and broke in a mad welter of white from a dozen directions at once; the most dangerous of waters in which to attempt the handling of small boats.

Barrett was faced with the necessity for making a hard decision. No boats could be launched in the lee of the *Augustus*, nor could any approach her from that side; for the reef there was already baring a hundred hungry pinnacles to the surge of each receding swell.

A LIFEBOAT *could* live in that white welter to windward of her—if handled by a crack crew. But, loaded with terror-stricken passengers, some must inevitably be swamped. And to pick up a boatload of struggling swimmers from that mad maelstrom—bad!

There was that oil, too. One gulp of that viscid mass in the mouth of a swimmer would clog the air passages and bring a death more quick and sure than drowning. He had seen a plenty of that, after the *Princess Sophia* disaster in Lynn Canal.

Yet, if he stood by and did all that he could to pick up the boats and survivors, nothing but praise could attach to Grant Barrett, whatever the result.

On the other hand, he felt sure there was sufficient water along the port rail of the *Augustus* to float the *Tillikum*. If he could lay her in there, and hold her there a sufficient time, he might take every soul aboard—dry shod.

But the tide was ebbing rapidly, and each passing minute placed an added strain upon the jagged fangs that pierced the bottom of the *Augustus* and held her upright. The chances were ten to one that, some time soon, that strain would fracture the brittle rock fragments and send the stricken steamer crashing down upon her side. And if the *Tillikum* were alongside at that moment—

He had not been blacklisted after losing the *Sonora*, despite Simpcoe's efforts to that end; but he well knew that another disaster, coming right on top of that, would spell the end of Grant Barrett's career as a master mariner. To his mind there flashed the words of old Captain Miller's reply to the investigating board after the sinking of the *Ventura*.

After long investigation, the board had decided to suspend the old veteran's license for a year, and had asked if he had any comment to make on their decision. Miller had drawn his gaunt old form to its full height, and replied:

"Gentlemen, you have taken five months to decide that I was wrong. I had to make *my* decision in less than two minutes!"

Grant Barrett must make *his* decision in less than two minutes, too. A chill trembling swept him from head to foot, and his stomach knotted into a cold, hard, quaking mass. A wave of nausea rushed up in his throat and sent him plunging to the lee rail of the bridge. He choked back the sickness with an effort; and by a greater effort forced his voice to steadiness.

"Keep the bridge a moment, Mr. Evans," he said. "And get over an oil

slick in that kelp patch to windward. That may help a little."

He hastened to his stateroom; and this time he filled the tall glass nearly to its brim. He sipped the brandy slowly, while he threw all that he had into a fight for self-control, and the courage to make his decision. His eyes stared, unseeingly, at the dull gray circle of the cabin port; and presently, from out that brass rimmed frame, the deep blue eyes of his dead wife appeared to smile—confidently, expectantly . . .

When he returned to the bridge the oil slick had been laid; but it was, as he had expected, having no effect on the tossing waters of the rip.

Barrett's face was a lined, gray mask; but his voice was strong and assured as he snapped out crisp instructions.

"Get a double row of mattresses over our port rail for collision mats, Mr. Evans; I'm going alongside. Make fast with bow and stern lines, and lead a spring from our port quarter to their stern.

"Mr. Williams, you will get out two gangplanks; one from our main deck to their lower; one from their main to our boat deck."

Grasping the megaphone, he sent a ringing hail downwind.

"Aboard the *Augustus!* Break out collision mats on your port side, and swing out everything you can from your starboard booms to list her toward the reef. I am coming alongside you!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" came faintly upwind; and as the deck of the *Augustus* erupted into orderly activity, Barrett turned to the voice tube.

"How's your bilge suction, Chief?" he queried. "You'll be using it soon; for I'm going to lay this hooker alongside the *Augustus*, and hold her there until we either have her people aboard, or have battered our side in."

"I'll sluice a muckle o' the entir-re Pacific through yon pumps, if ye'll but leave me twa sound timbers ta mount them on!" MacLeod roared back. "An' ye may cut a new side for this box fra anny egg crate, Skipper-r!"

Grant Barrett's expressionless face belied the tensity of his nerves as he conned the *Tillikum* in to her landing. To strike the *Augustus* with any degree of force was to invite disaster; and to handle the *Tillikum* in that frothing sea he must come in with considerable speed. If he had calculated aright, he would have ten feet of water under his keel along the port rail of the *Augustus*, but if he had misjudged the position of the steamer by so much as twenty feet, he would be piling his own ship up alongside her, with the tide not yet at low ebb.

He slid the *Tillikum* alongside the stranded vessel with the precision of a Maine guide handling a canoe; not touching, but so close that a man's hand might not have been passed between the padded sides of the two ships.

Wind and sea sent the *Tillikum* lurching down against her neighbor with a lifting, grinding thrust; and for a moment Barrett feared that even that slight shock would start the crippled liner toppling. But she held, and the youthful Mr. Williams swung his gangplanks rattling into place.

They were a crack crew on that crack Canadian liner—officers and men. In ordered haste they sent their passengers trooping aboard the *Tillikum*, with but little more confusion that would have attended their embarkation from a city dock. In a much shorter time than Barrett had dared hope, the gray haired commander of the *Prince Augustus* crossed the gangplank and saluted the bridge of the *Tillikum*.

"Carry on, Captain!" he said.

Barrett leaned over the bridge rail.

"Take in the stern and spring lines," he called. "Heave taut the bow line and hold it so." To the quartermaster he said, "Hard a-starboard—" and twisted the telegraph to "slow ahead."

With her nose snubbed tightly to the rail of the *Augustus*, the stern of the *Tillikum* swung until she was pushing at right angles against the side of the stricken vessel.

"Cut the bow line, Mr. Evans," Bar-

rett called; and as the taut manila parted he set the bells jangling for "full speed astern."

The *Tillikum* leaped backward on the instant; the sea boiling white around her from her wildly thrashing screw. She had not made twice her own length when the *Augustus* sagged, shuddered, and came crashing down upon her side.

"I thought that was about due to happen," Barrett murmured as he wiped the dampness from his forehead.

HE MOTIONED Evans to take the bridge, and glanced at the wheelhouse clock. Eight bells of the morning watch. A short four hours to eight o'clock, and seventy long sea miles to the Rupert dock! He shook his head dubiously, and once more called the engine room.

"We've got them all aboard, Mac," he said. "And I've got a date in Prince Rupert at eight o'clock this morning. Do you think you can bleed that out of those engines of yours?"

"I'll gie ye all I've got, laddie," MacLeod replied. "But that wull no be above sixteen knots; and I hate to think what even that wull be doin' ta yon heap o' scrap."

With a wide, white bone in her teeth, and a buckshot rattle of spray against her canvas dodgers, the *Tillikum* sped southward. At 6:30 they had Green Island lighthouse abeam, and Barrett was ready to give up. Only an hour and a half left, and thirty-four knots to go. Moodily, he checked off his landmarks as they passed.

Whitesand Island; Brodie Rock; Coghlan Rock, with the gas buoy on Hodgson Reef dead ahead. Suddenly, he darted into the chartroom and flipped open a tide table. When he returned a moment later, there was a reckless gleam in his steel-gray eyes.

"You had better get a second man to the wheel, in case one should drop dead, Mister," he said grimly. "We are going through Metlahkatla Passage!"

The chief mate gasped. Metlahkatla Passage is a shallow, tortuous channel between Tugwell Island, Tsimpsean Peninsula, and Digby Island. It is much used by fishing schooners and other small craft plying northward out of Prince Rupert, because of its saving of nearly ten knots over the steamship route around the south end of Digby Island.

"Can we make it, sir?" Evans asked, incredulously. "The chart shows only six feet there in some spots."

"We're drawing a bit over seventeen feet," Barrett answered. "We have an eighteen foot tide today, and it will be more than half in by the time we get there. There will be water enough, if I can keep her in the groove; but a few sets of hinges in her hull would help, in turning some of those corners."

He grinned, and once again whistled down the voice tube.

"Stand by for squalls, Chief," he called. "I am barging in through the Methlahkatla Cut-off, to keep that date."

"Ye're daft, mon!" MacLeod roared back. "Yon passage is as narrow, an' as shallow, an' as crookit as an owner's mind! Let be."

Barrett chuckled.

"Just the same, we're going through," he said. "Or I'll leave chunks of this crate's bottom hanging on all the high spots!"

"A-weel, then; I'll joost be getting into ma sweemin' gear," came the resigned answer.

They stood in between Tugwell and Digby Islands at undiminished speed; thereafter, the things they did would have turned gray the hair of any conservative mariner.

Mr. Nathan Simpcoe, peering from the port of his locked stateroom, died twenty-nine separate deaths during the next thirty minutes—every one of fright. Presently he drew the curtain across the port, and sank weakly upon a bunk, where he lay quivering and moaning with mingled fear and rage.

Scraping the very barnacles from a rock here; sending the sand swirling up

from a hidden sandspit there; tossing her giant bow wave well up over the tree roots. Turning, twisting, doubling, but never slackening speed, the *Tillikum* surged onward, while Grant Barrett barked a steady stream of staccato commands to the helmsmen.

Another right angle turn to starboard, and the end of the passage was at hand; with the harbor and city of Prince Rupert in sight to port. The channel narrowed and shoaled here; with a string of rocks making out on one side, and a long sandspit from the other.

"Here's the tough spot, now," Barrett said. "When I give the word I want you to heave that wheel down like nobody's business. Head between those two buoys, and favor the sandspit side a bit. Ready, now. Hard a-starboard!"

The *Tillikum* swayed and heeled drunkenly to the sudden thrust of her hardover helm; but her head came swiftly round to port, and her wheel just clipped the fringe from a growing kelp patch in its swing to starboard.

"Steady! Port a little! That's well! Starboard! Starboard, now! Ah-h-a-a!"

The heel of the *Tillikum* struck the yielding sand of the spit; checked, bumped, lifted a bit—and dragged over. They were across!

Chief Mate Evans, standing by the anchors on the forecastle head, removed his gold braided cap, placed it solemnly on deck and made a deep obeisance to the bridge.

"Yours sincerely, Captain!" he said.

THE EIGHT o'clock whistles were blowing as the Motorship *Tillikum*—Barrett, master—made her lines fast to the Dominion Fish Company wharf. In the little group gathered to watch his arrival Barrett recognized a customs broker of his acquaintance.

"Morning, Mr. Hardy," he hailed. "Will you please phone the customs that I have docked with passengers and freight, and the shipwrecked passengers and crew of the *Prince Augustus?* The inspectors who set out to meet me in answer to my wireless are probably still waiting at the south end of Digby Island."

The broker waved his understanding and left the dock; and Mr. Nathan Simpcoe arrived on the bridge. Mr. Simpcoe's features and attire bore witness to the ravages of the night; and Mr. Simpcoe's rage was tumultuous.

"Get off this ship you—you anarchist! You Bolshevik!" he screamed. "Immediately, you drunken rowdy! Immediately, do you hear? You are discharged! You should be arrested! No one but a drunken, witless lunatic would do the things you have done with a ship this voyage! Going alongside that vessel on the reef! Showing off! Running over rocks and trees and sandbars! You—you—uh!"

A strong red thumb and forefinger had clasped Mr. Simpcoe's tender neck from behind.

"Shall I dump this bag of sewage overside, or merely kick it up the dock, Cap'n?" Chief Mate Evans inquired heavily.

His blue eyes were in laughing contrast to the deadly menace of his tone; but Mr. Simpcoe could not see the eyes. He squealed in terror. Squirming frantically, he surprised himself by breaking clear, and fled, scuttling, to the safety of the crowded main deck.

A tall, hawk faced man whose golfing tweeds bagged ludicrously upon his gaunt frame, detached himself from a little group of the wrecked liner's officers, and hastened toward the bridge. He arrived with outstretched hand, and a volley of short, clipped sentences.

"Name of Collingwood, Captain Barrett. Prince Line. Must thank you for your job last night. Top hole. Neat. Seamanship. All that sort of thing. No end. Er—couldn't avoid hearing what the old blighter was sayin'. If drunk—as he says—like to stock your brand for our own skippers! What?"

He grinned engagingly, and extended a card.

"Come round and see me when you get clear here, Captain. Office or club. Either place. Any time. Must have you on one of our boats—*Prince Charles*, I think. Mate, too, if he'll come." He nodded to Evans. "Righto? 'By, then."

He shook hands heartily with them both, and hastened from the bridge, having given neither of the men there the opportunity to say a word.

Barrett smiled quizzically at his chief officer.

"I'd say that Mr. Collingwood logs about twenty British knots, himself, most of the time," he murmured.

Evans grinned widely.

"All of that," he agreed. "But I will hook my hawser to him, any time!"

Barrett went to his stateroom to gather up his meager belongings, and to pack his bag. Might as well get clear of this packet at once, he thought. The formalities of the customs would not hold him long; and he could leave the *Tillikum's* papers with the American consul, to be called for by her next skipper.

His eyes swept round the room in a roving inspection, and encountered the tall green bottle of cognac. It was still half full.

He took the slender bottle in his hand and for a long minute sat staring thoughtfully at the golden starred label. Then, whimsically, he saluted it and addressed it gravely:

"It seems a scurvy trick to jettison a friend who has proven a friend in need. But I don't trust you, John Barleycorn. You are too prone to take charge yourself; and there can be no division of authority at sea. So—"

From his tower of vantage on the Dominion dock, a hoistman glanced down at the *Tillikum* in time to observe a sinewy hand, clasping a slim green bottle, extended from a porthole. The hand was followed by a blue serge sleeve, on which four tarnished gold bands glinted dully. And the slender bottle plunged into the deep . . .

A Story of the Cossacks

IVAN

By

NATALIE B. SOKOLOFF

IVAN removed his *papaha*, an enormous headpiece of dirty gray sheepskin—an article of dress no self-respecting Cossack could dispense with—and proceeded to wipe his bronze-like forehead, the mass of black, entangled hair and all around his thick, reddish neck with a rag of a handkerchief very slowly, methodically, thinking it over, as was his habit whatever the task, situation or circumstances.

Replacing this historic and still fashionable hat which for all Ivan's gigantic aspect looked as if he had put on a small haystack by mistake, he asked the nearest soldier for a cigaret and sat down in the scorched, dusty grass by the roadside, hoping vaguely he would have time to smoke it through to the end.

It was very hot. A strange, vibrating stillness, peculiar to Caucasian midsummer noons, lay over the valley covered with yellow dried grass and cut through lengthwise by the winding road, white and glittering in the scorching sun. It even seemed to touch the gently rolling hills, gray-green and toy-like in the distance; to reach the low mountains, gray, purple and violet, that rose beyond, enclosing the valley on three sides. It intensified the vivid colors of the vast open landscape so that the blue of the skies and the blue of the sea, which stretched some hundred feet away from the road, and parallel to it, dazzled the eye.

Ivan sat immovable, his huge, solid back in the torn khaki shirt to the sea. Natural tact had guided him into that

position but, even facing it, even watching that gruesome business that was transpiring on the beach, he would not have been aware of it.

His eyes were fastened on that far-away spot to the right where the road, climbing a short slope, disappeared into the greenery of the small gardens outskirting the town on the hill. That spot was near enough to distinguish a horse from a man if not near enough to distinguish a rider's features. But if the rider would prove to be the one Ivan was expecting, he would recognize him instantly. As yet no one could be discerned there. The road was empty. The whole valley as far as Ivan was concerned was empty. He was but dimly conscious of the men about him.

And there were some fifty of them, all soldiers. One and all enlivening the scene with movement and noise. Their strong, muscular figures stood out in sharp relief against the background of yellow grass and dazzling blue sea. They all looked alike; all burdened with fatigue, boredom and want of sleep. Their shoulders stooped, their gait was heavy, rolling. They had spent the last mad, madly flashing twenty-four hours in the saddle with not so much as a sip of water to moisten their parched, dust filled throats. Their shirts, breeches and boots were in rags. When they spoke their voices rose in hoarse shouts as if there was still that tumult of battle over which to make themselves heard.

Only in one way did they differ. Thirty of them were armed. The remaining twenty or so were not. The number of the latter diminished gradually. Now and then a group of men, their bayonets flashing in the sun, would walk off leisurely seaward, a couple or so of the weaponless following meekly behind; and in some five or ten minutes the armed ones would return alone. They would again light their cigarets, walk about aimlessly, approach the horses which stood in a close group nodding their glossy black or brown necks as they chewed at the blades. They would adjust or loosen a saddle, or they would sprawl in the grass to snatch a minute's rest.

Ivan had long ago finished his cigaret. Automatically he thrust his hand into his pocket for another, only to recollect that he had been stripped clean of everything by the conquerors.

Ruminatingly, indifferently, he swore through his teeth—

"The Red pigs!"

"What did you say?" inquired a soldier drowsing in the grass beside him.

"A smoke."

Ivan's voice gave the same impression as his figure, features and general build, a sense of something very large, heavy and solid.

"Haven't got one," said the soldier. "Ask your brother."

It took a good while for Ivan to take that in, meditate over it and bring out at last in his slow, lazy way:

"My brother? No, I don't like to ask him for anything."

His voice carried far and the two men who stood together a bit away from the soldiers turned to look at him. Any one would have picked them out in the midst of this tattered soldiery as persons of importance. Both had that air of assured authority about them, and they were clean and well dressed. One was a young Cossack, very tall and slender and with a handsome though somewhat sad, dark face.

This was Gleb, Ivan's brother, and the leader of the Reds. He had beautiful white teeth which flashed in quick, charming smiles, and as he stood there in his characteristic pose, one hand on his hip, his body swaying slightly, proudly, swaggeringly, a sparkle of ironic amusement in his shining eyes, he looked the personification of perfect young manhood, reckless, handsome, tensely alive and triumphantly happy. He had had time already to appropriate some of his enemies' garments. Boots, such as no plain Cossack ever wore. A low, small black *papaha*, topped with scarlet and ornamented with gold braid adorned his haughty boyish head.

THE MAN by his side presented a sorry picture by comparison. He was very tall—very long rather—very thin, and so gloomy of mien and bearing that he looked as if wilted. The soldiers unanimously and instantly had nicknamed him the "Intellectual". Indeed, there was about him, notwithstanding his military garb, that peculiar air hinting at long hair, flowing tie and general disregard of proprieties common people associate with students. Moreover, as every one knew, he was the brains of the expedition and a sort of unofficial adviser to the shining soldier Gleb.

At the sound of Ivan's voice Gleb now, flashing his white teeth in a smile of recognition, began to walk, or rather saunter, toward Ivan, one hand on his hip, his tall slender figure swaying slightly, amused, ironic. The Intellectual followed, morose, gloomy, his sharp eyes screwed suspiciously. They came up and stood looking down at Ivan.

Ivan regarded them dispassionately, then spat into the road thoughtfully, slowly. His eyes fell on the red silk scarf wound about Gleb's sleeve and he spat again, retaining, meanwhile, his Buddha-like immobility of pose and countenance.

Two things only the brothers had in common. Black hair and a perfect seat on any mount. As to the rest, Gleb was all Ivan was not. While Ivan asked for nothing but to be allowed to go on tilling his land till the end of his days (each owned a tract of twenty acres), romantic Gleb burned with a hundred ambitions which, on the whole, however, amounted to an almost tearful desire for a pair of elegant boots—and a man to clean them.

Hence, when the Revolution burst out suddenly in one tremendous conflagration of strife and struggle, of blood and hate, the whole land from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean and from the Arctic to Asia Minor was in a day as if torn asunder between the two armies, the White and the Red, each of which sprang into being overnight.

And there the brothers stood confronting each other, grim with hate and gay with vengeance. They forgot they were brothers; Gleb had tied a red scarf about his sleeve, Ivan white; thus they had separated.

"What is it you want?" Gleb was now saying in his singing, playful voice.

"He wants a smoke," put in Ivan's neighbor hastily.

The situation was disturbing, to say the least. Every one within earshot turned his head and waited.

Gleb, shielding his eyes with his hand, gazed down the road townward. Then he produced a silver cigaret case ("The robber!" was Ivan's mental note) and when Ivan made his selection handed him a light.

"Well, where is that officer of yours?" Gleb demanded pleasantly. "His Nobleness is keeping us waiting."

The sneer was there as he pronounced the old title of respect, notwithstanding his intention to make it sound casual and amused.

"Well, never mind." He threw back his haughty head. "We'll get his Nobleness."

"How he hates the poor youngster!" thought Ivan.

In his thoughts he always referred to his captain as "the youngster". The captain, indeed, was not only young but, being very frail in appearance, looked a mere boy.

"Maybe they won't get him," Ivan said aloud.

"How's that?" Gleb paled with instant fright. "Why, the Reds are everywhere. As far as Taman the whole country is ours. Oh, they'll get him."

"Maybe they won't," repeated Ivan.

Until but an hour ago he had been sure of his Nobleness's safety. They had agreed the night before to take the Satan's Pass, a trail known but to a few, in case they should fall into ambush—which they had. Ivan had missed his chance, but he had caught a glimpse of his Nobleness, the moon silvering his small frail figure, galloping in that direction. Nothing else mattered. But now Ivan knew they would get his Nobleness. They

would get him for sure now. Out of all the routes the pursuers had chosen that very one to follow.

At first the discovery left Ivan stunned. Then gradually his spirits rose. Something almost like excitement, something almost bordering on happiness began to stir in his stolid heart. Remembering his fright of a minute ago he called himself Doubting Thomas and his eyes glowed at the thought of how his Nobleness would emerge triumphant following the imminent combat, which, under the circumstances, would be not of arms, of strength, but of brains, wits, quick thinking. Gleb had called his Nobleness a fool several times in the old days. Now he would see!

A fool, indeed! His Nobleness who was so witty, so clever, so brilliant. There was a shade of meaness, perhaps, in his Nobleness's smartness, now and then. Indeed, if regarded simply as a man, a plain Cossack, say, his Nobleness would leave much to be desired. On many an occasion he had revealed himself to the loyal Ivan as something of a weakling, a coward. But his Nobleness was not a plain Cossack. He was a nobleman; he was an officer. And he was a captain and Ivan's superior. As such he was splendid. One in a thousand . . . A fool, indeed! As if his Nobleness did not know his value, his value in the White armies. If he was gone his place would remain empty forever. In spite of everything his Nobleness must remain whole and unharmed. Yes, in spite of everything he must find a way to join the retreating Whites. And he *would* find a way. Ivan was certain of that. And he smiled at the thought that his Nobleness would prove too much for Gleb.

And again he repeated—

"Maybe they won't get him."

It was something to see Gleb's face pale with fear of disappointment. Ivan was not without a certain sense of humor.

His blandness, however, enraged the Intellectual, who now suddenly raised his long arm, striking Ivan in the face. Blood trickled down the chin of the Cossack who, though taken unawares, displayed neither surprise nor pain. Ivan wiped the blood away with the back of his hand and gazed at his boots.

"I can't bear him," explained the Intellectual, trembling all over. "Just look at him. Look at that forehead. Those eyes. Not a gleam of intelligence. A mujik. A beast of burden beaten into obedience and devotion by the masters. Stupid as an ox and as stubborn. A dangerous element of the Masses. A hindrance to our Cause. He must be instantly reformed, or, if past that stage—" he made a gesture.

At the sound of his voice, tense and pitched, men began to come up, forming a group about the brothers and the orator. The Intellectual was very popular. His wildly waving arms, his heat, fury and sudden lapses into dire despondency provided good humored, unrestrained mirth.

"They are a long while about it," remarked Gleb, looking townward. "Here, Ivan, if you know where he is, you must tell us."

"I tell you he is a beast of burden. We must recourse to harsher measures," cried the Intellectual, his eyes glowing with anticipation.

Ivan, through the rag he held to his bleeding mouth, brought out indifferently—

"I won't tell. No matter what you do to me, I won't."

And every one understood he would keep his word.

"Now look here, my man—" the Intellectual spoke kindly though somewhat condescendingly. "You must drop this nonsense, you know. You think this officer of yours means something to you, but really, if you would only analyze your mental reactions, you would see how stupid it is to entertain anything but contempt for the man. What is this captain of yours but an idler, a libertine, a liar and a traitor? I'm sure he's wrecked many a happy life, men's and women's. I know his kind. An affair with one while deserting another, in love with a third and meanwhile courting some young innocent girl for a wife."

IVAN could not but admire the Intellectual. It was exactly what his Nobleness was doing or about to do. But then his Nobleness belonged to that class where it was considered but proper to act so. This long haired one judged his Nobleness as if his Nobleness were a plain Cossack.

"No," thought Ivan. "They are not very clever, these Reds."

"And then," the Intellectual continued, "take the Masses. Did he ever contribute to the good of the Masses? I'm sure he never even gave a thought to the Masses. You, for instance: I'm certain he even beat you now and then."

"Well, you hit me, didn't you?" Ivan put in sullenly. "And then he never hit me but once and he was drunk then. And when a man is drunk—"

The Intellectual made a gesture as if to say, "I give up," and sighed.

Silence fell.

The soldiers contemplated Ivan thoughtfully.

"Now, I don't know—" one, leaning on his rifle, suddenly began to talk in that grave, slow, stumbling manner peculiar to peasants when confronted with a mental problem. "I don't know and don't remember, as you might say. A man now, a person, a human individual now, I don't remember that I cared for. But I had a dog once I cared for."

"What kind of a dog?" some one inquired with bright interest.

"Well, it was a small dog," the soldier explained, frowning with the effort. "I don't know whether it was any particular kind of a dog. It was just a small dog."

And once more silence fell.

In the distance, out of the greenery outskirting the town on the hill, a small group of riders appeared at last and, descending the slope at a walk, began to near swiftly at a brisk canter.

Even from afar the small, frail figure of his Nobleness stood out distinctly in that riffraff cavalcade. He was very fair, blue eyed, with a child's rosy skin and a short blond mustache. In his neat military cap and khaki jacket buttoned severely all the way up to his small, round chin, his seat gracefully erect, he seemed oblivious of fatigue, heat and the gravity of the situation. A handsome young man of noble blood and good breeding out for a morning canter.

Ivan, his arms akimbo, his head thrown back—that typically Cossack pose denoting haughty pride—surveyed the faces about him to see the impression his Nobleness produced on all these "robbers." It was a good impression. Even Gleb looked a bit awed.

The party approached, dismounted. His Nobleness swung out of the saddle lightly, throwing the bridle to the nearest soldier.

"Ah, Ivan," he said, making that familiar gesture with his small gloved hand.

Gleb and the Intellectual came up.

"Now we'll see," thought Ivan proudly as he watched the three conversing in the friendliest possible manner.

From where he sat he could not hear what they said. They appeared to be discussing something. Gleb kept turning his head in Ivan's direction. He looked restless and as if on the watch. Ah! Now it would come! His Nobleness no doubt was already arranging it all. Some brilliant plan. Some trick. A getaway . . .

And suddenly Ivan remembered how tired he really was. He remembered it only now—now that he could afford to think of such trifles, to relax physically, mentally, and rest. He yawned. His eyes wandered about lazily. The soldier sprawled in the grass beside him looked as if he were really asleep. Yes, he was actually asleep. Snoring. There were two revolvers at his belt. By just stretching his hand . . .

"No, his Nobleness will think out something less risky," thought Ivan.

His brother and the Intellectual were walking toward him.

"It's all the same to me which one it is. Ivan or his Nobleness," Gleb was saying as they came up. "Do what you think best for the Cause."

His eyes twinkled as always at mention

of the Cause. He surveyed Ivan searchingly, then smiled.

"It will be a fine proof to the men what scoundrels these aristocrats are," the Intellectual replied.

He then explained to Ivan that his Nobleness would be allowed to go into town to see his people. He would go alone. But solely on the condition that Ivan was willing to act as hostage. If in half an hour his Nobleness failed to make his appearance . . .

"Well—" the Intellectual spread his hands—"you understand."

If, however, his Nobleness returned, Ivan was a free man.

Ivan's heart leaped.

"Sure he can go see his people," he said in his slow, heavy manner. "Sure he will come back," he added, meeting Gleb's eyes, which were dancing with amusement.

"So it's me, not his Nobleness, he's after," he thought. "Well, he never liked me."

As he rose his heart thumped so he could hardly stand. What a smart youngster his Nobleness was!

His Nobleness swung into saddle as Ivan came up. He was a trifle paler than usual.

"Well, Ivan," he said rather absently, looking down at him.

Ivan met his glance.

"Youriy Sergeitch—your Nobleness." Ivan stroked the horse's neck. "You go see your people, Youriy Sergeitch. I'm all right. I am glad you can go see your people."

How could he put it into words that he, Ivan, understood the arrangement perfectly?

"Youriy Sergeitch," he began anew, "this is a good mount. It's a fine mount. I wouldn't be surprised if it could easily make Taman in an hour, Youriy Sergeitch."

"Yes, it's a good mount," remarked his Nobleness absently, as he adjusted the rein in his hand.

He turned the horse's head, spurred and galloped off.

IVAN stood looking after him. Then once more he removed his *papaha* and wiped his forehead, face and his thick, reddish neck. There was nothing to worry about now. Once more he sat down by the roadside, this time facing the sea, for there was nothing taking place on the beach now to be shy about.

Among the treetops on the hill in the distance he could discern the Byzantine towers of his Nobleness's villa. The old countess, his Nobleness's mother, had a very young and pretty maid. This maid wore turquoise earrings, and Ivan, as well as Gleb, who both played court to the girl, never knew what it was that so attracted them—the blue of her earrings or the blue of her eyes. His Nobleness was known to kiss her frequently behind the kitchen door. Thus Ivan came to know the dashing captain.

And now the blue of the sea suddenly reminded him of the maid's eyes, or was it her earrings? Dreamily he wondered whether he was sorry he would never see either again. What else had he known it was a pity to leave? A good, long sleep? A bottle or two of wine, vodka? What else? There seemed nothing else.

He yawned. His head began to nod sleepily.

He was not the conquered, but the conqueror. The old order into whose ranks he had wandered through sheer chance of his solid tastes had proved its strength. Had proved it still retained all the prowess of old in coming to grips with life and emerging victorious. For the Whites will conquer surely with men such as his Nobleness in their ranks. The Whites who represented the old order—that old order which was solid, and heavy, and hard to bear with at times perhaps, but which at least respected the rights of ownership—ownership of cattle, of huts, of mounts and of that dear land which Ivan loved more than himself.

Ivan slept . . .

Sudden movement and noise awoke him. There were men on the beach. Among them he recognized the small,

frail figure of his Nobleness. He thought he was dreaming, but a soldier passed leading his Nobleness's horse.

He rose to his feet slowly. He was terribly angry. Angry as only a man betrayed can be. Indignation made his breathing difficult. Then gradually his anger began to recede, leaving him bereft of all strength to think or feel anything whatever.

Gleb stood before him, amused, mischievously commiserating.

"Yes. It's his Nobleness."

And, flashing his beautiful white teeth in a happy smile he went on, "You know, that soldier—he's still asleep—" and he raised his beautiful eyebrows meaningly. "Two revolvers—and he had them all the while."

"I thought of that," said Ivan quietly, tears running down his coarse cheeks. "But you would have got us, anyway."

"No. I wouldn't have let them shoot. I might have gotten you by mistake. It would get about . . . Killing his own brother . . . Somehow it doesn't sound well . . . I had to think something out.

"And while you sat there with that soldier beside you asleep, with two revolvers at his belt, I thought out a little plan. It had to be done very quickly. For if you got those revolvers and started to shoot, and took to horse, you and his Nobleness, and me standing there afraid to use my gun for fear of hitting you, why, you'd have gotten away. So I said to his Nobleness—I played kind hearted and all that—I said—

"'Isn't there some one in town you'd like to say goodby to?'"

"Of course he grabbed at the chance. You thought he was smart. You thought he'd go and never return. But I knew he was a fool. I knew he'd come back—and so I got him."

Ivan could only wave his hand helplessly as he began to walk away.

Grief, humiliation and despair seemed to be tearing him to pieces all inside. But none of these emotions could be detected in his face, figure or gait. A lonely figure of a gigantic Cossack in dust covered boots, ragged shirt and enormous *papaha* walking unhurriedly along the white road which glittered in the sunshine against the background of yellow grass, blue skies and dazzling blue sea.

OVER THE TOP WITH RASTUS BROWN

By WILLIAM E. BROUGHER

OVER de top! Over de top! Ain't it scand'lous, man?
Gotter leave dis good ole hole
Whar' I'se burrowed like a mole—
Good Lawd receive mah po' black soul and' take me by de hand!

Over de top! Over de top! 'cross dat no-man's land,
I hears de sahgant's voice ring out,
I hears de corp'ral 'gin to shout—
Dis nigger's heart ain't none too stout—gizzard's short o' sand.

Over de top! Over de top! out where dem Boches are,
I hears de cap'n's whistle toot.
I dodge dat big lieutenant's boot.
I rolls right out and 'gins to shoot, an' starts mahse'f a war.

Over de top! Over de top! ag'in de risin' sun.
See dem niggers fall in line—
See dem bulgin' eyeballs shine—
Look out nigger! Don' step on mine—let's take it on de run!

Over de top! Over de top! Jes look how slow dey gwine!
Lined up like dey's gittin' paid,
'Fore Gawd! dis ain't no hen-house raid,
An' I don' like no fun'ral p'rade, an' specially when it's mine.

Over de top! Over de top! Jes' hear dem 'chine guns rattle!
Kerplunk! one hit mah ole tin hat,
De fur flies roun' an' I sprawls flat—
Like Liza done caress me wid a baseball bat—an' stays dar till a'ter de battle.

Over de top! Over de bumps! Back to a big horspital
I rides de joltin' ambulance,
I rides dem rockin' rails ob France,
But Liza won't cash mah in-sho-rance—I's feelin' as fit as a fiddle.

Over de top! Over de sea! back to Liza Jane—
In dat little cabin in de big ravine
We'll fill dis lid wid evergreen,
'Caze it sho' helped mah old black bean to stand *one awful strain!*

CONTINUING

A Novel of Hurricane Williams in the South Seas

ON THE Island of Karnu, Red Ghorlan lived with his beautiful daughter, Raccla, and her half Chinese girl companion, Lele, bitterly keeping his secret. Besides himself only the Chinese sailors who had helped him scuttle and loot the ship *Anne of Southern*, years before, and old Lydia, who had been the companion of his dead wife, knew of the crime that had caused Colonel Moreland to take the name of Ghorlan, and bury himself from the world. And now the boat in which the Chinamen had gone out to fish had been found upturned, floating in the lagoon.

Ghorlan hated the planter Hale, who lived across the lagoon, and his friend, the renegade slaver, Captain Rolf Hazard. And when Raccla came running one day with word that a wounded man had swum ashore, Ghorlan was enraged, thinking him some one from the plantation.

"Who are you?" he growled. And the answer was like a blow.

"Hurricane Williams. I got away from Hazard last night, after he had taken me and my blacks from a canoe at sea. He sold my boys to Hale . . ."

Hurricane Williams! Ghorlan knew he was looking upon the most famous, most feared, of all South Sea adventurers. He had no love for Hale and Hazard and his kind, and he had heard that Williams had even less. Generously, then, he took Williams in and saw that he was nursed back to health.

Unknown to Ghorlan, the half mad old woman, Lydia, took Williams aside one day and told him the secret of the *Anne of Southern*. The woman was dying and she wanted Ghorlan, whom she hated, brought to justice. Williams warned her to keep silent about the fabulous wealth of jewels buried in the cellar. Now he knew who the Chinamen were that he had taken off a remote island a short time before; and he understood why they were with the thieving trader, Harrison, whose ship it

IF THERE BE COURAGE

By GORDON YOUNG

was that had cast them up on the lonely isle. Harrison, evidently well paid, had agreed to take them away from Karnu, helping them to carry out the illusion that they had drowned while fishing. His boat wrecked, Harrison had stolen that of Williams—and wrecked it; thus forcing Williams to put to sea in a canoe, helpless to escape the rascally Hazard . . .

Williams, his health recovered, crossed the lagoon one night to Hale's plantation, made a daring single-handed raid and rescued his blacks, then made off in Hale's schooner. And a few days later he put in to Waklea—whence he had departed in the canoe—and found Harrison and the Chinamen still there. The trader had learned something . . .

"They've got jewels, Williams—an' we can lift 'em. Take these chinks aboard pretendin' to help them get away to China, then—"

Williams silenced him with a gesture.

"The Chinese are coming," he said grimly. "What they bring with them I shan't try to learn. But if you or they lift a hand aboard this ship, I'll kill you—the lot of you!"

"'OW YOU mean—?"

"Just that."

"You won't touch—"

"Not a thing. Whether it's jewels as you say, or pebbles off the beach as they pretend."

"Then why—then—but why not?"

"One reason is perhaps that once I had jewels, both hands full, honestly come by. Learned then and still remember they do not give a man anything worth having."

"Then it's true—" Harrison muttered.

"What's true?"

"The tale men tell of how a woman you'd married stole your mother's—your family's jewels an' come off down here to Sydney with another man an'—"

Williams made an unangered gesture for silence, paused as if about to speak,

then went away, abruptly giving the door a sharp pull that sent it sliding shut.

Harrison sat with eyes blankly fastened on the door, his dry mouth half open. No doubt of it, this Williams was crazy. He'd have naught to do with jewels! Superstitious? Afraid of them? Crazy—that was sure.

Harrison looked at his tied foot. He leaned forward, fumbling half listlessly. He had tried so many times, determinedly, that hope was half gone. Jewels . . . Harrison licked his dry mouth. *He* had no superstitions. With Williams dead—ah, there was fame and rewards, too, for that. But the damn cannibal blacks—they'd be like wounded mad dogs running loose! Still, anything could happen.

The sun lay low in western clouds that seemed all on fire, burning with jeweled flame, when three Chinese, huddled in a small outrigger with two natives paddling, came out to the schooner with all their meager possessions, and hung alongside, waiting to be invited on board.

Williams looked down at them, at their upturned lean, expressionless faces studded with slant snake eyes, at the foodstuff heaped about their cramped feet in the small dugout.

"Me wantchee stop this shipee, Cap'n Wailums. All same you talkee."

They wanted to come on board the ship, as he had promised to let them.

"Where's the others?"

"Woo Lung too slick. Soon dlie. Woo Lung wailo, Ah Yong he come that tim'. Come bight sun Woo Lung talkee he dlie. *Maskee.*"

Woo Lung was dying, was sure that he would be dead by sunrise, but he had sent the others to the ship, and Ah Yong remained to watch.

"Be better off here. Not much in the way of medicine. Such as there is he can have it," said Williams.

"Woo Lung no can do." The Chinese groped at his stomach, groaning, illustrating Woo Lung's pain. "He dlie come bight sun."

Williams knew that if a Chinese or black made up his mind that he was going to die he was pretty sure to do just that—the blacks even if there was nothing the matter with them. The only cure was a pointed boot toe and rope end to stir them up into forgetfulness. But that wasn't the sort of cure for a sick man, and likely enough Woo Lung, for all of his island experience, had eaten bad fish. Much of it was bad, and fish non-poisonous in one bay might be dangerous in another.

The Chinese came on board. Their foodstuff was tossed up. Williams poked at it inquiringly with a foot. Yams, bananas, a few chickens, some fish in little baskets of plaited coconut leaves—and no doubt in the gutted fish or a split yam, the jewels. Still, perhaps not. The Chinese did not seem at all uneasy.

When they turned about, humbly waiting to be told where to go, Williams thrust his hand at the rags about the loins of the one nearest, uncovered the handle of a knife and drew it out.

"You'll not need this," he said. There was no resistance at all as he took a knife and dagger from the others.

Barai, not liking such company, took them forward, pointed out their quarters, said unpleasant things. The Chinese with their food about them squatted down with an air of woeful, submissive patience, said nothing, looked at nothing—just waited.

Night came and two hours later a moon rose above the hills, casting a pallid light, weaving deep shadows, giving objects a bulky blackness vague of outline; and another canoe came—a small outrigger, with two natives rowing and a Chinese.

Williams, looking down into the upturned Chinese's face, asked—

"He is dead?"

"Him dlie sun. Him wantchee speakee you. Not ought dlie beflo' speakee you. Muchee talk makee Woo Lung. Send kalin you. You go make that ting? Woo Lung hab pidgin inside mouth with you. *Maskee.*"

Woo Lung lay dying, but begged that Williams would come and learn secret things that Woo Lung wanted to tell.

It sounded as if he wished to make

confession and, even if dying, perhaps bargain with the truth.

"Woo Lung dlie-lo. *Fai-tee!*"

Woo Lung was dying. Be quick or it would be too late . . .

Williams frowned in the moonlight, debating with himself, curious and seeing nothing to distrust. From the first they had said Woo Lung was sick; and now three Chinese were on deck as prisoners or the same as prisoners. If crafty treachery had been intended would they have come to squat like hostages on the *Glasgow's* forecastle? Woo Lung could, and dying perhaps would, tell much truth about Ghorlan, the *Anne of Southern.*

"I will come," said Williams. He was curious about Woo Lung.

He had no reluctance about going ashore, his only fear being that his boat crew, if left on the beach, would quarrel contemptuously with the Wakleans and make trouble; the Wakleans themselves being a cowardly lot, unwarlike but vain.

Williams, having in mind what might be done to the helpless Harrison rather than anything else, put the three Chinese into a deckhouse and locked the door; then taking Barai and three blacks for the oars, with no arms other than the revolver he carried and the knife, he had Ah Yong, who had come as messenger from Woo Lung, get into the boat; and so went ashore.

As he left the boat he told Barai to go back to the schooner and stay there.

Natives were about the beach, curious, grinning doubtfully and not quite at ease. The ubiquitous Sam was prompt with a jabbering welcome, loud with self-praise.

"Me one damn fine fella. You see, Cap'n. Why hell fire you come, unh?" Sam laughed excitedly as if he knew the answer to his own question.

"Go tell your Tarou before I leave the village I'll call on him tonight. A man can't pay with what he hasn't got. So instead of coconuts we will talk of something else."

"Ah, you like girls maybe, unh?"

"No—pigs." Then to the sad, silent and humble Ah Yong, "Lead the way."

"*Maskee,*" said Ah Yong, bowing low his head about which his braided pigtail was coiled like a sleeping snake, and his narrow slanted eyes had the look of a snake that does not sleep.

CHAPTER VI

WOO LUNG

WILLIAMS knew the village, having been there often; its seldom visited bay, even if open to the sea, was a place to pause from time to time for rest or hiding. With the precautious forethought that made him hard to find, or catch if found, he had learned certain trails and visited the remote bushmen of the tangled uplands. The charm, or whatever it was, that protected him seemed to impress savages everywhere. They often suspected him of magic, having never seen such a look in other men's eyes as was in his; and they were afraid of his lack of fear; then too when they knew him better they learned to trust both his promises and his threats, and found that he was generous with gifts, swift in punishment.

Ah Yong, walking with humble, low shoulders through patches of moonlight, went silently. He passed near cooking fires where grouped natives stared and called with inquiry, and were not answered.

The village, a small one, was built up with the helter-skelter disorder of a people who had involved notions about property rights; and if the huts were huddled companionably together, the alignment was haphazard, giving a tangled crookedness to the street. At the end of the street Ah Yong paused in the shadows before a massive haystack of a hut, saying—

"Now hab come this side."

It was dark outside, and unlighted within. Tall palms wove their fronds restlessly together high overhead with much rustle and creaking as the land breeze, hurrying seaward, stirred them; and the moonlight fell with winking gleam through the shifting interstices.

Ah Yong called through the doorway. There was no answering sound; but Ah Yong with a sort of monotone, pitched plaintively, talked, yet was still unanswered. He turned to Williams saying that perhaps Woo Lung slept, or perhaps already the death devils had carried him off. He stepped inside into the double distilled blackness of the hut—windowless, the ground for a floor, a thing of leaves and grass, with down-sloping eaves almost to the ground; and under their low, overhanging shelter pigs wallowed out resting places and grunted in skeptical protest.

Ah Wong poked about in the dark with slithering bare feet and his fumbling awakened the rustling of something crisply dry. He went out of the back doorway to the cooking shed where he stirred ashes into a glow and breathed upon them, holding the end of a palm torch—palm leaves tightly twisted about a sprinkling of resinous gum—to the fire. A wavering finger of flame arose—a trembling splash of light that flickered through the window-like rear doorway. He reentered slowly, holding the torch low so that the flame's tongue could not by chance touch the straggling ends of dried grass that dangled overhead.

Williams, at the front doorway, looked through. It was hot within, and heavy with the smell, very like a stink, that the huddled Chinese, who always avoid fresh air as if it were poisonous, had cast off. The hut was nearly empty yet not clean. A litter lay tossed toward corners, and husked coconuts, much like the shriveled dried heads of dwarfish men, lay about. A fishnet of fiber, hanging overhead to dry, was like a great spider's web. Rumpled mats lay in a huddled heap; and on a pallet of other mats near the center of the room was a motionless thin body, with face averted and a bare yellow arm crooked over the head.

The threshold of the door, of both doors, was above knee height to keep out inquisitive pigs, thievish dogs and chickens. Ah Yong stuck the end of the torch in a hole in the ground, braced it with rocks, and looked toward Williams, who stepped over the high threshold. He came near the prostrate man and stood looking down.

Ah Yong spoke, but Woo Lung did not answer. There seemed to be no breath in him, yet when Williams stopped, fingering the pulse of the thin wrist, Woo Lung without opening his eyes pulled the arm away, like a man in a dream.

"Bimeby sun he talkee," said Ah Yong humbly.

The long lean body of Woo Lung lay naked except for a tangle of loin cloth. He looked emaciated, but had looked emaciated on the Ponlea Reefs where Williams first saw him; and about his dark yellowish body were the lumps of scars, knife bitten, of a man who had once fought well. About his neck, too, was a lumpy, sweat stained, blackened leather bag, slightly larger than a man's fist. It lay temptingly unguarded on the mat, held by a string that a jerk could snap.

Williams smiled grimly, not deceived, and thinking:

"He may be sick, perhaps is; but half the reason for my coming is that I may look at pebbles now and be convinced. I wonder why they think I think Chinese might be such fools as to leave treasure where it could be snatched!"

Williams squatted haunch to heels, looking up quickly as Ah Yong stirred with a slithering creep of bare foot, and said—

"Stay where you are!"

Ah Yong, with the mild look of a man wrongfully suspected, stopped still and stood fast, trying to seem humbly puzzled as he hugged his bare forearms against his stomach and bent his body in submission. And Williams, sensitively warned, gazed up at him suspiciously as if about to leap with one hand outgroping for Ah Yong's brittle neck, the other fanged with a knife.

He would no more have let Ah Yong get behind his back than he would have let a snake get into his bed; and at the first sign of treachery he would kill Ah

Yong as he would have killed a snake.

Ah Yong, not speaking, slunk backward in the pantomime of submissive reproach, seeming misjudged.

Then Williams, squatting on his heels, pushed his hand against Woo Lung's left side, searching out the heart beat; and his hand, calloused and rough as shark skin, was like a rasp on the hot, oil soaked skin drawn tightly over the bony breast.

Woo Lung stirred with the writhing petulance of a sick man; and Ah Yong, with listening alarm, ran at the doorway and with squeaky shrillness called out as if challenging some suspicious sound. Williams glanced up with head lifted, listening too for the sound; and at that unguarded instant, Woo Lung, supposed to be dying, with deft quickness and rapid flash of arm yanked the revolver from Williams' holster and with a squirming spin of his body, eel-like in its slippery writhing, brought himself acrobatically to his feet behind a post under the ridge pole, with the gun leveled and a long dagger drawn from the loin cloth that had been concealed by his lying on it.

And Ah Yong, who had awaited his cue, with as much precision as if from frequent rehearsal, caught up the torch and, half crouching, held it flame down, ready to rub it out in the dust and bring dense blackness into the hut—leaving Williams to fight armed and invisible men.

WILLIAMS' hands, strong as loops of knotted hemp, had all in a flurry of grasping slipped again and again and again—as if indeed from an eel's slimy skin—on Woo Lung's sinewy, oil soaked body; and as Williams stood half crouched, rubbing his oil covered palms against the legs of his canvas trousers, Woo Lung's deeply scarred face smiled with evil humor; saying—

"Chinaman more big devil than all same you, eh?"

"A devil, right—and clever," said Williams with matter-of-fact admission.

"You t'ink now maybe you do what Woo Lung say, eh?"

"Depends on what you say, Woo Lung."

"You take China boy Sydney town?"

"No."

"Why you say no?"

"We'd all be hanged, mast high, and left to dangle!"

"So? How so, eh?"

"I'm known. And if I were caught I would see that you didn't escape."

Woo Lung stared with blank eyed intensity, then—

"What you mean?"

"What I said."

"You takem knife, dlop it. 'N' you setee dlown. We talk much."

Williams drew the knife and tossed it hilt first to the ground, then squatted, cross legged. The Chinese, he saw, was too crafty to be wantonly murderous; but meant to force Williams take him and his fellows to some port where ships came and they might leave.

Woo Lung was no fool and no coward, far sighted in trickery. He, not having at any time been mistreated by Williams, had no hateful grudge against him, but much fear; and enough respect to be sure that Williams was a trustworthy seaman.

"Lis'um, Cap'n Wailums. You want live?"

"Not greatly, no," said Williams with a casualness that sounded like, and may have been, truth.

Woo Lung's scarred face writhed in an enigmatic smile.

"All same I want you live. Cap'n Harrislon—" he studiously ground the r's between his teeth as if cracking nuts—"he dlie long time so only you now left to take China boy 'way."

"Dead nothing. He's as 'live as you are."

"So?" Woo Lung inquired with a wicked twist of his thin lips, and a tone that hinted with sinister vagueness. Then with a slow shake of his head that changed to a bobbing nod, affirmed, "He dlie this night, al-leady."

"How so? And my blacks, what of them?"

"Dlunk," said Woo Lung laconically, nodding.

And Williams answered with an understanding nod.

"So that's it, eh? You play a deep game, Woo Lung, and have the devil's help. That halfbreed Sam?"

"Yes."

Thus with elliptical question and answer Williams learned that he had stumbled into the Chinese's net, being drawn ashore while Sam, coached in a villainy that suited his nature like a glove to a hand, had taken out liquor, strong palm wine and perhaps some of the gin and whisky found by divers in the wreck. The blacks were as easily abused by liquor as children by poisonous candy.

Then while Ah Yong stood by, much like a statue, with the torch ready to be prodded into dust, Woo Lung in his turn asked questions of Williams, softly intoned with sinister shadow of sound—

"You know we come flom Karnu, eh?"

"Yes."

"You know why, eh?"

Williams' glance shifted in a moment's scrutiny from the lean scarred face to the dangling bag at the throat, and so gave his answer with the glance, confirmed it with a nod.

Woo Lung, with a slow gesture, raised the hand that held the dagger and half absently fumbled with the bag, then asked slowly—

"Why you no take it, eh?"

"It's accursed!" said Williams, feeling just that and speaking as if giving reason enough for any man.

Woo Lung drew back, startled, staring long and hard as if somehow not doubting; and he asked with almost companionable inquiry—

"How you know what only China boy know?"

Williams, cross legged, with hands palm down on the ground, eyed Woo Lung with staring directness, his lean body still protectively sheltered behind the upright post and ready to dodge to either side. Ah Yong, a long jump away, held the torch flame down—and a knife, too; he peered like an evil statue.

"I know much of curses, Woo Lung. Much," said Williams, since the life he led and the deeds he did were not to his liking, yet he could not, would not change.

Woo Lung said something rapidly, and with scarred eye a-droop seemed staring with one eyed intensity, awaiting his answer; and what he had said came into Williams' ears and hummed there unrecognized at first. But Woo Lung repeated the words and Williams then understood that this evil old fellow, with a kind of fantastic imagery, had asked how Williams knew of the curse laid upon them by the "daughter of the dragon's blood." All of which mystified Williams and would have seemed nonsense but that there was no nonsense in Woo Lung's earnestness.

And Williams, with a swift skitter of thoughts, searched for what Woo Lung could mean; then remembering that the woman the great red bearded Ghorlan had loved was part Chinese, made the guess that it must have been she whom these yellow cutthroats feared with a kind of adoring awe. Not until she had died did they gather the *Anne of Southern's* treasure into their hands and slink away into the darkness, pretending to have been drowned.

"Because she has died do you think she is dead?" Williams asked with a snap of words like the crack of a lash, flicking as well as he could whatever sensitive superstitious spots this murderous old scoundrel might have. "Or that faithless men have luck?"

"How you know her?" Woo Lung was painfully mystified since he and his men for twenty years had cautiously watched all white men who came near Karnu, and Williams had never been among them.

A SOUND not unlike the sharp snapping of dry twigs reached them and the dim echoes of far off shouts; and the shouting, even far off, grew dimly tumultuous with yelps and howls where savages

fought. The snap of muskets, like the popping crack of brittle wood, mingled with the cries. The cannibal blacks, even if made a little drunk, had not been taken helplessly.

The Chinese cocked their heads in attentive listening; and Williams, without word or sign or warning, came up off the ground with thrust of palms and straightening snap of bent knees so that as if thrown he jumped half the width of the hut, straight at Ah Yong.

Ah Yong, with a curious frightened squeak, like a rat in terror, swayed back with a hasty upward thrust of knife and club-like swing of the torch that all the while he had been holding low to dip into the dust.

Woo Lung, with a startled twitch of his finger, snapped the gun in a wavering aim; and the explosive sound seemed to rock the hut and a whirlwind of powder smoke like a concealing cloud swirled up blindingly. He fired again and again at the hazy, struggling shapes; then staggered back, amazed, half blinded by the smoke, half dazzled by the sudden sweep of flame that with the crackle of fiery teeth and lick of tongue flashed along the wall, where Williams, who meant to have light for this work no matter how much heat came with it, had thrust the torch; and Woo Lung in panic's amazement drew back, shooting until with empty gun in hand he crouched dazed as if already dead, in hell, amidst the flames. A bulky shadow with a hurtling twist seemed to leap at him, but struck the ground with lifeless flop as Williams threw the dead Ah Wong from him, and followed with a leap, as if thrown too, with Ah Wong's knife in his hand.

No word was spoken; none was needed, only a shout could have been heard, for the flames had swept to the right and left along the wall to both doorways and roared like a captive thing jubilantly free, making its own draft as it leaped out and up. The hut was half on fire; in another half minute the whole inside would be ablaze and no living thing could live. Heat like a wavering veil shimmered through the smoke, and though the men were toe to toe in a low crouch they peered with strained eyes as if at far off, hazy shapes. Their dark skins were heat flushed to the color of rawness, both gasped with open mouths; and they were like madmen, both doomed to a minute's death, yet fighting to see who should step first into the darkness as if to lead the way.

Woo Lung, with a cat-like stroke of his long right arm, stabbed at Williams' breast, but the point was turned aside with backhanded stroke and click of steel; and he leaped back as Williams lunged. Then the Chinese, who had been born with a knife in his hand and never without one, jerked his right hand back and, hilt first, the dagger flew to his left and instantly lunged out with rapier thrust, but with far reaching caution so that though it touched the flesh of Williams' breast the point bit skin deep, scarcely more. Woo Lung again gave back as Williams pressed at him, not feinting as one skilled in knife play, but set to strike and kill though he in turn must take the blow of longer steel, driven by a longer arm.

Woo Lung, with a fencer's craft, gave back. Williams was ten times the stronger, as quick, and less afraid, and meant to kill even if burned alive. In the open air with room to circle and turn, Woo Lung might have toyed evasively by the hour, untouched. But here and now death himself kept watch with but a few sandy seconds dripping in the hour glass.

The heat of a roaring oven had dried the oil and sweat of Woo Lung's body; he was no longer slippery, and his lungs hurt, his throat seemed scorched. He gave back again and stopped: fire was behind him and its blistering touch was like the bite of tearing pincers. Woo Lung cried out vaguely, like a cat in flames; then feinted to lunge, but stopped, for Williams waited motionless, wanting him to come. And as Woo Lung settled back with a writhing twist of fire blistered body to brace himself, throw craft aside, throw himself forward and have it all over in one

frantic flurry of slashing and stabbing, Williams leaped.

Woo Lung swung his arm in a wide hasty sweep at Williams' unprotected left side, for Williams' left arm was out and up; but Woo Lung's swing overreached when their bodies struck breast to breast with a blow that knocked Woo Lung's shallow breath out of him in a gurgling gasp; and Williams' left arm clamped down like the sudden jerk of a python's coil, hugging the Chinese to him inescapably, and stabbed—fully expecting to be stabbed too; but he wasn't, for Woo Lung's fingers opened lifelessly and his body swayed with only a dead man's pull. And Williams, with powerful lunging push, sent him back and headlong against the flames of the wall, then dropped to his knees, his mouth almost in the dust, seeking the fresher air.

Overhead the whole inside of the hut was on fire; the doorways were walled with flame. To go through either of them would be to come out badly burned, if not indeed too badly burned to live.

Williams turned to that part of the wall as yet not on fire, for the flames with upward suction at the doorways had caught the thick thatch and, outside, roared overhead with the sound of a great wind. He tore at the thatch of the wall where it touched the ground, dug with knife and fingers at the ground; and making a slight opening, thrust down his mouth sucking as a strangling man sucks air, breathing hurriedly and deeply.

Then he rammed his head into the loosened thatch and squirmed with heave of shoulders and twisting jerks, now on his back, now on his face, not pausing, for the flames were all about and the heat was great; but with one convulsive muscular jerk after another, writhed until his arms were through, and with a powerful pull and push and surging heave he came free, with his clothes half torn off and his body scratched as if by cats.

He got to his feet and staggered off, guiping air. Then he stopped, shook himself, brushed at his face, coughed and, turning, eyed the flames. The hut next to it already on fire; and the next to it would burn, and the next and next. To Williams it had been just one fight more; and another lay ahead of him.

Already the natives had seen and were coming, chattering frantically, drawn away from the beach where they had gathered to watch, or rather listen, to the fight on board the *Glasgow;* and where unhappily, they had seen the cheeping shadow of a small craft that seemed all sail beat up with reckless jostle right to the bay's rocky mouth. Then a long boat with oars' stroke left it and made for the *Glasgow,* where the howls deepened and Waklean warriors skittered into the water, diving shoreward.

THE WAKLEANS, with huddled listlessness like unlucky folk submissive to evil fortune, stood about watching the flames, not trying to fight or check them. Some men, but mostly the women, here and there carried out possessions only to throw them down forgetfully.

They knew, or thought they knew, what had happened. Williams was dead, killed by the Chinese who had promised much, convincingly, to Sam and Tarou, and to all the chief men. Being astute, the Chinese had known how to bargain with weaklings who wanted to feel themselves great warriors and have more loot; and it was like triumph to kill the frizzle headed man eaters, first made drunk.

But it seemed that most of the many devils which every village sets up and bows to fearfully were full of tricky wrath, somehow punitive, angered perhaps by some forgotten detail of worship; and so a low craft, all sail, had appeared magically out of the black vastness of the ocean, turning triumph into panic; and fire, also guided by devils, had been loosened in the village. Perhaps Williams' vengeful ghost had bullied the village devils into this terrible punishment. The old men of the village chattered some such words, for wizards must always explain whatever happens plausibly; and perhaps half believed their own fears.

The fire roared like a multitude of hoarse voices and with far upward toss of blazing arms flung a spindrift of sparks and burning fagots; and some entangled in the drier fronds of tall coconuts, set trees on fire. The natives wailed in futile protest, yet watched, fascinated by their own destruction. The bright blaze drove back the jungle shadows, banking them deeply as if piling shadows one on another beyond the flickering stabs of grass fed flames; and the shadows leaped like huge living things, shapeless but tortured. Blaze filled the village with a light brighter than any day; and the natives gave way before the heat and glare, and shivered with a kind of moaning as falling sparks showered into a blaze on some remoter hut.

Williams came out of the shadows to where he had seen the fat Tarou blubbering mournfully, his own hut in flames. Williams was known at a glance but half unrecognized as alive, seeming ghost-like, being blackened with the wisps of grass ash, his shirt in tatters, and coming without haste or fear as a ghost, invulnerable, might come. He came into an open patch of sheer blaze, knowing the natives rarely struck at bold men face to face; but he would have come even if that had not been true. The natives gave way with timid shrinking, feeling that they had no way to tell that he was not dead. They were much afraid, but more curious.

Tarou, too fat to run, teetered back on shaky knees. His sleek oiliness was dappled with sweat that glistened in the flame flung light. His mouth was open and fright popped his piggish eyes; and he lied before accused, guiltily; gulping half spoken words that said he knew nothing of the plot, 'twas all the half white Sam's work; and Tarou all in a gasp of breath promised that the Chinese would be killed, and Williams was his brother. Tarou, as yet unquestioned except by the staring gleam in Williams' eyes, then hastily turned the truth inside out to say that his warriors had hurried to the *Glasgow* to help defend it against the men, white men, who had come in from the ocean—which was the first that Williams knew of their coming, and he had the uneasy suspicions of a man to whom all strangers and most acquaintances are enemies.

With quick grasp he took Tarou's arm, twisting it into a painful hint of wrenched flesh and broken bones, holding the chief as hostage, and said boastfully because modesty is not a virtue within the understanding of savages, that he had walked through the fire, leaving Woo Lung dead behind him; and that Tarou too would be dead, quick as a fish could flip its tail—there being nothing quicker in island lore—at the first shadow of menace; otherwise Tarou had nothing to fear; and Williams told him to say so to the natives that huddled near, indecisively.

Tarou, half elated at seeming unsuspected of connivance with the Chinese, coaxingly warned his companions; and with some stumbling and much puffing, went along, his flabby arm in Williams' grip, and they were followed by natives.

Tarou complained distrustfully, wanting reassurance that he was not to be punished for the miserable Sam's guilt; and though they walked in the dazzling glare of the burning village he seemed to forget that loss in the increasing fear that he would lose his head.

Nearing the beach they met a man or two running in alarm from among the few Wakleans who had lingered there, more excited by the fight on the *Glasgow* and what might follow than by the fire; and these running men cried the panicky warning that cannibal raiders were coming with the terrible man known as Morsu.

And right on their heels other natives followed, crying the same, warning the villagers to flight. Some then in hasty fear wanted to kill Williams; but others with more sense scolded and jabbered menacingly to protect him, Tarou the loudest among them, being the surest to die if any one struck at Williams.

Williams did not pause to listen, but went on, half dragging Tarou on his shaking knees, followed by stragglers

that quarreled in fear among themselves.

As they came out on the rocky slant of beach with the towering blaze behind them, the moon overhead, wild happy yelps went up from the water where two boatloads of blacks were coming shoreward. They thought the Wakleans had returned beachward to fight. There was a rattle of muskets and winking blaze of flame. The village natives scattered and Tarou pulled imploringly to be loosened from the hand that held his arm. Williams shouted with a voice loud as if trumpet blown—

"Jake—hold them back!"

Then a tall form rose up in one boat and with laconic swearing in a rasping voice, mingling English with native words, gave orders; and in the other boat a shaggy headed shadow of a man, rippling oaths happily, rose up.

The one was Jake Brundage—Morsu, the Lean One—tall and grim and calmly merciless; an old ex-convict, his face stitched, seamed and wrinkled, one of the leg-ironed squad that had once flung the hanged Williams from a cart in the dusk and replaced his body with a sack of oakum. The other was Francisco the Spaniard, a broad breasted merry devil, passionately fearless and very wicked.

Williams loosened Tarou with a push, telling him to run, hide; and he went on wobbly legs with great gasps of frightened breathing. Others fled with him, fearing the muskets and yelping anger of the cannibals, thinking that they were to be loosened in a raid. But Williams went waist deep into the water, striking down muskets, shouting at the blacks as at dogs that have seen game break cover. Some were still tainted with the palm wine.

Brundage, with calm strokes and rasp of oaths, laid about him with the flat of a cutlass. Francisco swore like a pirate, with terrible threats, his voice half musical, and bumped mop heads together the better to be understood. Some few of the blacks broke through in plunging dives, wetting their muskets; they raced across the rocky beach, yelling; but seeing that they were not followed, their eagerness dwindled. Pretending a lack of cowardice, they jumped about on the beach in a sort of dance, bawling jeers toward the flaming bush; then seeing that the boats had been turned about, they ran back to the water, calling loudly not to be left. They were left: the boats went on, their own fellows jeering at them with mockery. They plunged into the water, swimming to overtake the boats; and getting near were beaten off with cruel sportiveness by their fellows. Brundage and Williams sat inattentive—men who recklessly broke orders were as dangerous as enemies. Barai, with an oar blade, battered bushy wet heads, cruel but half merry, swearing in what he thought was English.

The upthrust of a black fin, gleaming darkly in the moonlight, changed the jeering to shouts of warning. Another and another rose. Francisco, forgetful of English, swore. The boats swung under sweep of steering oars, Brundage at one, Francisco at the other. There was a jabbing of oars, striking blindly; clamorous outreach of arms and rock of gunwales as men were pulled inboard with skin rasped. The giant Barai, with a yell of amazement, wrenched an oar blade against the tug of an underwater pull, and raised the oar—splintered by shark's teeth. Hazy ghost shadows glimmered through the water as sharks swirled, bellies up.

"Zhey look for more!" said Francisco with teeth gleaming as he pointed toward the *Glasgow* from where dead bodies had been thrown overboard, and the taste of blood, sifting through the outgoing tide, had brought prowling killers in a hungry swarm.

THE STAINS of butchery were all about the *Glasgow*, and dead bodies lay crumpled as if broken by great hands and flung aside. What had happened was never to be exactly known. The blacks lied fearfully with brazen contradiction, Barai as much as another, denying that they had parleyed with the halfbreed Sam, denying that they had drunk with Wak-

leans, telling vague stories of sudden attack and their own bravery. They were not so much afraid of the truth as ashamed. Francisco, half amused, tormented them with questions. He grinned to hear them lie so implausibly, like stubborn children entangled in badly woven stories. Brundage and Williams were inattentive to the blacks' chastened eagerness to please, but spoke shortly, with displeasure.

Brundage, rowing across from the lugger to get into the fight, had found the Chinese armed with steel out of the galley, screaming shrilly. Brundage coldly, without commendation, said the blacks would have massacred them anyhow. The palm wine, offered in treacherous friendliness, had not been strong enough to make the blacks helpless; but lax and off guard, confused. Some two or three were surprised and murdered; but at that the alarm was given. Brundage had found the giant Barai, in contemptuous fury, using a loaded musket for a war club. Excitement had turned the firearm into the use of more familiar weapons.

Brundage said nothing of what he had done beyond the laconic, "We come to see what was the row"; but Williams, knowing him, knew that for all of Francisco's agility and courage, the lean, unhurried Brundage had been first over the bulwarks, cutlass in hand. He fought in silence, deft and passionless as if thrusting at a target. Francisco, with shaggy head in a swirl of motion, was clamorous in a fight, almost joyful. The Wakleans had gone overboard like scattered moths, but some remained; the half-breed Sam among them, his head splattered with Barai's gun butt. And the Chinese, cornered, shot and stabbed and hacked, had gone too—after they were dead.

"That trader Harrison," said Brundage, "he's dead. Chinks slipped down an' done him in before the racket started, most like."

He knew the Chinese had done it because natives hacked and pounded as if dead men still felt pain. Two strokes had done for Harrison, who probably did not expect any but was bargaining with promises for his life when steel slithered between his ribs, heart deep.

For an hour or more there was the bustle of cleaning. Brundage, grim and noiseless, with rasp of laconic order and gesture, pointed here and there, saw everything. Williams trusted him utterly in big things and small. Francisco was as loyal, but less trustworthy, being forgetful and erratic; must do things with a flourish and not in silence; disliked the minutiæ of unimportant duties, and would not throw a kid of spoiled fish overboard without a speech. But in his excitable way he was as brave as any man.

They were in the cabin listening to what Williams said with clipped phrases. Brundage, sitting upright on a chest with a revolver in his belt, absently fingering the edge of the cutlass as if looking for nicks, listened impassively. Francisco, squatting cross legged on the deck, broke in with enthusiastic babble, praising Ghorlan, adoring Raccla whom, with Spanish imaginativeness, he pictured as glorious with beauty. In his prejudiced eyes all women were beautiful, if young.

Williams said nothing of treasure. Brundage would have cared nothing about it; Francisco too much. They thought he had returned to Waklea to salvage his wreck: there was no word linking the Chinese with Ghorlan. Tomorrow Williams meant to scrape about in the earth under the ashes of the Chinese's hut, not greatly hopeful—but where else to look?

Brundage, without a word, perhaps irritated by Francisco's romantic inquiries about Raccla, went on deck. As he stepped from the companion he swept the seaward horizon with his glance. Far off he saw something, but his eyes went past it without a pause; then he looked again, staring. In the moonlight haze it had seemed almost a low cloud. He crossed the deck, jumped up, holding to backstay, staring. He rubbed his eyes and peered again.

Then Brundage jumped to the skylight and shouted below:

"On deck an' away! The hangman's helpers are standin' in! Sail an' smoke—the *Astar's* comin'!"

Williams came on the jump, Francisco with him and bubbling oaths, protesting that luck was like a tricky woman; it was no time for the *Astar* to come—he was tired and needed sleep.

But it was the *Astar* and she came on as if she knew why she was coming. Even as they looked her sails began to vanish. No longer tacking, she would now head into the land breeze and tide, come up into the wide mouthed bay. The gun boat had been drawn from far seaward by the blaze of the village.

"To the hills?" said Brundage, and Williams nodded.

"To ze devil!" said Francisco, flinging a hand at the gunboat's shadow. "Go 'way. We don't want see you!"

The blacks were aroused in startled sleepiness, not quite understanding. Francisco's cheer helped them to grow excited. Brundage, with grim calmness, herded them into the boats, and when all was ready called to Williams, who stood on the skylight looking toward the coming gunboat as if searching audaciously among his thoughts for some way to check or trap the *Astar*. He turned and came slowly, abandoning the ship but not hurrying. He dropped over the side lightly into the stern sheets beside Brundage. The oars struck at the water.

A few minutes later Williams, with a backward gaze, saw a gush of flame, heard the thunder clap of a cannon and a shell with a whistling scream dropped into water. The blacks yelped and struck the water frantically.

"How can they know? At that distance, in moonlight?" Brundage asked.

"They've just come from Karnu. Learned there that I made off in the *Glasgow*. Night glasses—recognized her. See too we're running. That's their guess. At least it's mine," said Williams.

Flaring mouths of the *Astar's* guns spat other screams and shells at them.

"They shoot like sailors," said Brundage, once an officer of cavalry.

CHAPTER VII

FLIGHT

THE TRAIL was dark, jungle shadowed, steep and rocky, seldom used except by bushmen who came down under the peace of bartering, wanting salt and fish. The blacks, even Barai, dreading strange places and darkness, had an uneasiness that might readily become terror. They tried to keep in a cluster about Williams, who led, wanting the *mana* of his presence, far greater than their own.

Brundage and Francisco came last. Behind them loud and seeming near in the night silence were the cries and halloo of pursuers, determined and revengeful, guided by villagers who told much that was not true, wanting sympathy and "smoke ship" justice on Williams and his blacks. Night searching in the jungle—day too for that matter—is a needle in the haystack business. The *Astar* sailors with unleashed eagerness pressed on, overconfident in their guides, and hating Williams for his barbarity—they had no doubt about his having murdered inoffensive natives and burned their village. Other stories of his heroism and justice were hearsay; this was evidence fresh from eye witnesses and ashes still aglow.

Francisco, groping on a mossy rock's face, felt his feet give way and he snatched blindly. His fingers closed on loose, grassy stuff, shallow of root, and he tumbled; then swearing, he arose on one leg with a hand to his knee.

"Damn fool me—I can not stan'!"

Brundage touched his shoulder, offering help.

"Ow, the leg—eet is a broke pipestem!"

"A bad place to be carried. Broke? Are you sure? Let me feel."

"Carry me an' be caught?" Francisco questioned indignantly. "No, no. I weel try—no! I weel go or I can't go! Do not call to heem!"

Brundage did call, but not loudly. A loud shout would have reached the sailors. There was no answer.

"He's got ahead," said Brundage.

"Zey are close," said Francisco. "Go!"

"An' you?"

"Hell an' Dios! Ze man that do not keep up is lef' behind!"

"But it's only a twist. Come, try."

"Oath of God, do I not try?"

"I know. But an arm to my neck—"

"To hol' you back? No, no, no! To be found is not to be hang'. I have been caught before."

"Damn, they are close."

"Go, or you weel lose the way too."

"I know the way, even in the dark," said Brundage. "Some years ago we had to do this before. 'Twas a storm that wrecked us down there. Come, let me give you a pull."

They tried together, both slipped. Francisco's knee was as weak as if broken. He thrust at Brundage, beating him.

"Go, go, go! You are ze fool! *Por Dios!*"

"No chance for a stretcher on this trail," said Brundage. "If you can't climb— But try, man!"

"Say 'fly!' I can do eet as well! Zey come near—go!"

"I don't like facing him with the tale that I left you," said Brundage simply.

"He weel like it better if you be the damn fool to stay! Mother of saints, do I have some fear of a leetle death! Bah! An' I weel not be hang'—I give you zat promise!"

"Come, let's find a hole or something. Tuck yourself into it. If they pass you by—stick it for a couple of days."

"Devils eat you! Go. I weel fin' my hole. Zey come—queek! If we both are caught, he weel have no frien'! Pah! An' to die—I weel not!"

They could hear the click of boots on brittle wood and the panting gasps of struggling men, calling out the way one to another. Brundage knew that he must go or stand and fight, be taken or killed. In silence he caught at Francisco's hand, pressed it, saying nothing, and went on, uneasy at heart as if it were cowardly to go.

Before he was two hundred feet up the steep tangled hill he heard the ringing shout of Francisco's voice, cheery with menace, telling the pursuers they must be out of breath, now they must stop and rest. The pop of a musket underscored the words. Francisco, if dying, would have his flourish. The cry of voices, startled and eager, answered, followed by a blaze of haphazard firing.

They called on him to surrender. He answered with a scrap of song that warned innocent girls not to trust strange men; and broke off warningly, saying that men lay beside him with guns leveled.

"Eet is dark. We wait for ze sun to see our way!"

He shot again. One man could hold the steep trail. He told them so and that if they did not believe to come on and learn.

Brundage, climbing, met Williams returning, the blacks about him like sheep at the tail of a bellwether. He asked one question, and it was like the jerk of clenched fingers—

"Why is Francisco there?"

"Broke his leg." Brundage thought it was truth.

"Why didn't he keep quiet? They might have missed him."

"Said he would. But he'd rather die with a song in his mouth than live silent."

"No getting him off now, but—" Williams stopped, his thoughts a-flash in zig-zag searching.

"'Twill be light soon," said Brundage, giving the warning without emphasis.

"We'll need light."

"He's tricky and hard to hold," said Brundage, who had often been dazzled by Francisco's erratic cunning. "But a broken leg will hold any man."

"They'll creep in around him. He hasn't a chance. Nor we to get him off. His leg is broken?"

"He called it a wrench, but couldn't stand. Now he thinks that in holding them he helps us."

"Come!" said Williams and turned, going back up the trail.

The hush of dawn's coming lay over the rock ribbed jungle. Light would give them ease of traveling, but increase

dangers. Williams, leading still, pushed against damp spiders' webs, strong as elastic wires. There was scrape of thorns and stumbling on rotted wood; the trap-like clutching of vines. Williams pushed on, tireless and contemptuous of men who tired.

The dawn came, ashen colored, drizzling, chill, with moisture clinging like cold sweat.

Brundage slapped with the flat of a cutlass at the bare thighs of a laggard black.

"Go on—on! You'll know what a white man's hell is like before this day is done—which'll be reason enough why you won't want to be Christian enough to go there."

The black clucked with surly reluctance, not understanding, but stepped faster.

NEAR evening two days later Williams led his men, the high mountains behind them, down the hills into a valley that opened to the sea. The blacks were worn out, many of them marked with the lash of cane vines, cut short and used as a rope's end. Nothing else would rouse them from fatalistic exhaustion; lacking stamina, they preferred death, that being very like sleep—but they preferred a peaceful death, not having the life whaled out of them by Barai's giant arm.

There had been parleying and dangerous encounters with the bushmen who were wary about measuring their numbers against the stranger blacks, for though wanting fresh heads on their rafters they were afraid of guns. At times arrows, poisoned or supposed to be, hissed out of tall grass from furtive young bucks anxious to boast of their prowess and so get wives. The answering crack of "thunder sticks" sent such attackers off in a panic.

This desultory, half sportive sniping did not interfere with the welcome, shadowed with the hope of a chance for treachery, which the leading men of villages, who remembered Williams, gave him.

But now at last they came down into the rich leeward valleys of Waklea where coconuts grew in forests, and traders came flocking to offer beads, calico, tobacco and forbidden gin for copra. The leeward Wakleans were a lazy lot, idling in the wealth of the coconut groves' fecundity, very familiar with white men and bargained sharply for trinkets.

Williams made inquiries as to what traders were on the coast; and learning that the *Sally*, with Sam Todd for captain, had passed two days before, going north, bumping along from village to village, chose to set out after him rather than look for another schooner that was reported nearer at hand. Some two years before Todd had raided the pearling grounds where Williams had left a heap of shell on the beach, maltreating the divers and making off like any thief.

"These boys—" Brundage looked at the exhausted blacks—"are done in."

"We'll leave tonight. They can sleep on thwarts."

"I'll pick the softest for myself," said Brundage.

Williams haggled and bargained for a big canoe. He might have taken it by menace, at least by force, but it was his queer way not to bully natives when he had no grounds for a quarrel. The headmen of the village squatted about him, and with tricky solemnity demanded more than they hoped to get. Williams, with a patience seldom used toward white men, bargained. He was at a disadvantage because he had little to offer except promises, since he was almost empty handed but for the guns his men carried; and he would not give up the muskets.

Brundage sat by, saying nothing but thumbing the edge of his cutlass. He seemed to get something of the pleasure out of feeling the sharp edge of steel that girls do from fingering silk.

It was to Williams' advantage, and credit, that the natives believed he would keep his promises; but they were not less extortionate than civilized creditors. At last when it seemed time, Williams carried

them away with amazement by promising to bring a live cow. They had never seen one. They had eaten pickled beef and liked it. A live cow, big as ten pigs! Curiosity influenced them into weakening. A live cow for a canoe with a sail. There was the matter of food for the canoe, drinking coconuts, taro and plantains. The live cow was not enough to cover all the food. Williams spoke of the horns the cow would have, of its tail like a rope. The headmen clucked incredulously, but wanted *tembac* too, and pipes. Tobacco was promised, and pipes.

The bargain made, the natives scattered through the darkness, gathering food.

Then, with hypocritical trickery on the beach, they offered Williams a smaller canoe then the one promised, pretending they had never considered giving up the largest. It was the sort of crayfish bargaining that they had learned from white traders. Williams, with patience, told them they were lying; the bargain had been made, they must keep it. They grew noisy with protest, waved their arms in menace. Some ran to huts and came back, fingering muskets. At this glimpse of danger Williams' blacks brightened, as dogs bristle their necks. At that the villagers, like another sort of dogs, began to wag their tails; but since Williams was taking the biggest canoe, would he bring *two* cows? A promise would have been easy and have bought peace; but he shook his head and raised a single finger.

The headmen insisted, perhaps not expecting to get two cows, but wanting the excitement of haggling. In the darkness, with the coward's care to stand well off, somebody fired a musket and ran. The villagers broke into a panic, running and howling, with muskets exploding aimlessly. The blacks fired eagerly into the shadows and now aroused, wanted to charge. So weary they could hardly stir but a moment before, they now danced and yelled, challengingly. Brundage and Williams turned them back toward the big canoe. Shots sang overhead and splattered the sand as they carried it to the water. The villagers would tell that Williams had stolen their canoe. Brundage unhurriedly walked backward, shooting and trying his best not to miss. It was not his nature to shoot merely to frighten.

They got into the canoe. Williams steered without so much as a backward glance as if he knew that looking in the direction from which bullets came would not keep a man from getting hit. He was watching where the water foamed on the reef, and making for the channel.

"They are following," said Brundage.

The villagers, having close contact with traders, were plentifully supplied with firearms which, though valued, were badly cared for, never cleaned and allowed to rust. As long as they made noise they seemed satisfactory weapons. Now they flocked into canoes, following, yelling threats, firing wildly.

Williams brought the canoe about. His blacks snatched up muskets. The pursuers sheered off frantically under the shower of bullets.

"And one of these days," said Brundage with grim disapproval, "you'll come in here with a live cow and tobacco."

Williams did not answer. He meant to do just that. Brundage knew it and said nothing more, but grunted in protest.

The villagers, keeping discreetly out of range but shooting often, followed the big canoe out to sea until the mat sail was set; then knowing it was useless to try to keep up by paddling, they turned back.

THE SCHOONER *Sally*, low in the water, black of hull, lay nodding at her anchor in the palm fringed lagoon off the village known as Kelo, where a white trader who grew fat on warm beer and his own trade gin had a station. It was not yet noon, but the trader and Sam Todd, boozing companionably under the spread of awning, sprawled in canvas slings and told funny stories.

Suddenly one of Todd's native sailors jabbered with arm outthrust toward where, a half mile off, a big canoe had

nosed in from the sea and, with a strong sweep of paddles, came on.

The big trader, known as Harry, rose up. His fat body quivered and vibrated as if he were padded with jelly. He blinked through little twinkling eyes and with a puzzled oath said:

"That's a Waklean canoe, but them's Solomon Islanders, Sam. Sure as hell's a foot deep!"

Todd, who had twisted about to look, now arose and went to the side.

"Hell! Where'd they come from, I wonder?" he asked wonderingly, not alarmed.

"Some blackbirder's been wrecked down the coast. They've took a canoe an' are lookin' for a ship."

"That's a trick I could turn my hand to, Harry!" said Todd, meaning that he would not hesitate to take charge of these ten mop headed blacks and turn them over to some planter. "I don't see no arms. What's under that mat, you reckon?"

"Food, likely," Harry guessed.

"Look at that big 'un steerin'! Wow, but he's a beauty!"

"Better keep 'em off for a gammon. I wouldn't be happy to have 'em swarmin' over my deck—not with me on it!" said Harry.

Todd drew his revolver from a flap holster and told one of the sailors to hand out some guns from the rack inside the after deckhouse; and he hailed the canoe which had come to within a hundred yards.

And at his hail the mat that lay in a crumpled heap about the bow stirred, rose, slipped overboard, and two white men stood up, one—the taller—with a musket in his hands, a cutlass at his side. The other was empty handed except for a smoldering match of twisted palm fiber and he crouched over a cannon firmly lashed with sennet at the bow.

With uplifted glance he shouted:

"I'm Williams, Todd! Give way or I'll blow you out of the water!"

At the same time Brundage, with wary watchfulness toward the *Sally*, passed back musket after musket to the blacks, all but two of whom dropped their paddles, took up the guns, and the whites of their eyes gleamed excitedly. The two who still dipped their paddles kept the canoe head-on and crept nearer.

Todd swore with a gasp of breath, his eyes fastened on the black shimmering muzzle of the cannon.

"If he fires that thing he'll sink his canoe!" said Todd, but doubtfully.

"Don't be too sure—not too sure!" Harry spluttered wheezily. "He allus knows what he's doin', that devil!"

"If you want to make it a fight, say so," Williams called with a calm lift of tone, moving his left hand with the lighted match.

"He's got you outnumbered two to one, Todd," said the unwarlike Harry, who had no quarrel with Williams, and wanted none.

The canoe was hanging off at eighty yards, nearly motionless, the dip of paddles keeping it head-on, the shimmering mouth of what looked like a six pounder set to sweep the deck.

"See here, Williams," Todd called, parleying anxiously. "What you goin' do if I give in?"

"Pebbles for shrapnel," Williams answered. "Sweep you clean if you don't give in!"

"But if I give in," Todd called. "What's your promise?"

"Put you ashore—unhurt."

"Looks like it was your turn to give 'im a ship!" said Harry, trying to be persuasive, at the same time with a nervous stroke of his palm wiping the sweat from his face.

"Well, come on up," Todd bawled. "You've got me aback. Come on up."

Williams shook his head. With a gesture of his right hand he steadied the paddlers, who, with reverse strokes, began to take the canoe backward a few yards. At the downward stroke of Williams' arm they stopped.

"I come no closer," Williams called. "This is the right range. Get nearer—can't sweep your deck. You know it!"

Todd swore, feeling cheated.

"Shoot that thing an' he'll sink his canoe!" he said again, half believing but still doubtful.

"Awful strong, them canoes," Harry protested. "Keeps her aimed right for you, Sam. Go through your bulwark same as wet paper."

"I'll count ten," Williams called, and raised his right arm.

At the seventh stroke Todd yelled:

"I'll give in! I'll give in!"

The strain of the menace was too much for his nerves, and he lacked the heart to make a fight of it. Todd was no out and out coward, but there was a deadliness about Williams' name, and a desperation associated with his deeds, that made men dread him.

"Then into your boat—all of you. And come out here—to me!" Williams called.

"I'll go ashore an' let you have the damn ship!"

"Do as told. Come out here, or—" Williams crouched, taking sight, and moved the match nearer the lump of a touch hole.

"We'd better do like he says, Sam!" Harry argued.

"Oh, well, but—" Todd raised his voice—"you've promised! Will you let us go ashore then?"

"Ashore, unhurt!"

The *Sally's* boat lay alongside. It was drawn near. Two native sailors got into it, helping the fat Harry who fumbled wheezily on the short sea ladder. Then Todd came over the side, staring sullenly.

The native sailors with a heavy swing of backs began to row, and Williams' blacks jubilantly yelped, half laughing. With a growl Brundage shut them up, but grinned grimly as if himself amused. Williams gestured, and the canoe swung broadside to the approaching boat and waited with the blacks holding their muskets ready to aim.

Presently Williams tossed away the smoldering match—threw it overboard and stood in the bow empty handed, waiting.

Neither Todd nor Harry had seen him before, but they knew him from what they had heard. He eyed them with an unwinking stare, and they gazed back, a little fascinated and uneasy. Todd wondered if Williams knew that it was he who some two years before had stolen the shell, beaten the protesting natives, taken their food, leaving them to half starve on the nearly barren atolls.

As their boat came near Todd's hand clutched Harry's fat arm and he blurted oaths, confused and self-abusive.

"That isn't— I might've known—a dummy cannon! Tricked! I knew 'twould 've wrecked his canoe, but you—!" He snapped his teeth and struck at the air, blindly.

It was too late to do anything. His boat lay under cover of the blacks' guns. He understood now why Williams had hung off, refusing to come near enough for the fraud to be seen.

The cannon was a young palm bole, the pith hollowed out, the "muzzle" smoothed and blackened. The outside had been scraped and rubbed with oil; and, heavily lashed with sennet as if to hold the recoil, it was cleverly disguised. At a village along the shore where he had put in to make inquiry about the *Sally*, Williams had prepared his ruse.

The blacks broke into yelps of taunting jeers; even Brundage grinned with a wry twist of his thin lips. But Williams stood like a statue made of bronze, waiting. It was no joke with him; he seemed to feel no elation.

Todd cursed with meaningless fury. He had lost his ship, and that was enough to make a man rage; but he knew, and was maddened, that from now on everywhere he went the rough South Sea men would joke and taunt him, speak of palm boles and wooden cannons. He had rather incautiously boasted of having yanked Williams' beard in carrying off his divers' shell.

"Keep alongside," said Williams as the canoe shot ahead, making for the *Sally*. And so the boat turned about and went back to the schooner.

TODD, Harry and the *Sally's* sailors were huddled into the after deckhouse and blacks stood guard about the doors. Others warned off the natives from the village who had come out, curious and excited; they circled the schooner in their canoes, asking questions and getting no answers.

Williams stood amidships, looking aft thoughtfully. Brundage was beside him absently fingering the cutlass edge, also thoughtful.

"If that's what you want," said Brundage, laconically submissive, "it'll have to be done, somehow."

"Anything can be done," Willliams answered with firmness, as if stating the basic faith of a religion.

"If you're lucky."

"If you plan well," Williams corrected.

Brundage grunted, vaguely doubtful, but answered:

"Whatever you try, I'll try too. We've tried enough there was no chance of doing—and have done it! But to get Francisco out of a gunboat's brig—he wouldn't be much farther from our reach if he was in hell!"

"The *Astar* will search the hills till her men learn we've got through. Then she'll round to this side of the coast to pick up trace of us. If we don't get overhauled in the next ten hours, we'll be clear away."

"And for once you want to be followed."

"An old dog *can* learn new tricks, Brundage."

"Yes." Brundage nodded. "You've learned a gunboat can't climb mountains."

"Ask Todd for his charts. Bring them into the trade room. There's a door between. They'll listen but hear nothing. Then we will give them a chance to see."

Brundage went into the after deckhouse where the native sailors sat disconsolately on the deck, eying the blacks that looked through. Harry and Todd fidgeted uneasily in chairs.

"Are we goin' ashore now?" Todd asked.

"Where's your charts?" Brundage said.

"He said we could go ashore," Harry put in, adding unctuously, "an' Cap'n Williams allus keeps promises!"

"He'll keep this one. Todd, your charts!"

Harry and Todd exchanged glances, which Brundage pretended not to notice; but, following Todd's sullen gesture, went to a chest, opened it, took out a long cylindrical case. With a long stride Brundage made for the door that opened into the trade room, passed through and with a rattling shove slid it shut.

Todd and Harry eyed each other, each with the same thought. The pirate had called for the charts to shape his course. If they could only overhear they would know which way he meant to go.

Todd arose restlessly, looked through the open door out on deck where the giant Barai stood alert, then leaned against the bulkhead of the trade room. Todd listened, hearing the crackle of the charts as they snapped back stiffly into a roll. One after another was opened. Then Brundage's voice—

"Here it is."

Todd knew they had then opened the one they were looking for.

He heard the name "Hale", and presently heard it again. Hale? Hale? The name meant nothing to him—then. He heard Brundage's harsh sarcastic growl—

"Be glad to see us again!"

The door opened again. Todd, with hasty deception, left the bulkhead, stooped down, said to Harry:

"Here it is. An' I been lookin' all over."

He made a pretense of putting something into his pocket.

Brundage asked—

"Ruler in there, too?" He pointed toward the chest.

"Yes."

Todd, like most South Sea traders, seldom used charts, and anything more than dead reckoning made navigation too complicated a science for him.

Brundage rummaged about and took a compass and parallel rulers. Returning to the trade room he gave the sliding door a shove; but this time it did not quite close.

Todd, pretending restlessness, moved about until he stood in a position to see into the room. The unrolled chart was spread on a trade table and its corners were weighted down with tobacco and tins of salmon. Williams was bending over the chart.

Todd turned away, afraid that he might be caught spying, but tried to listen. Williams and Brundage scarcely spoke; but presently Todd heard again the name "Hale." Brundage said—

"Hale'll be surprised to see us again so soon."

A moment later in a tone of alarm Brundage exclaimed—

"What's that!"

Then there was the clatter of running feet as he and Williams went out of the starboard door. A gun was fired. Voices rose in a clatter of wondering excitement. The blacks on guard turned away, and other shots were fired.

Todd pressed to the door, looking through. All he saw was startled natives in canoes paddling off, with backward glances; but Brundage was giving orders as if in hasty alarm. Williams stood at the starboard bulwark, watching the canoes.

Todd, with a kind of desperate hesitation, turned to the trade room door. He peered through. There lay the chart with the rulers still on it. He pushed at the door, leaned through, took one long step within, stared down. In light penciled lines he saw where Williams had marked the course for Karnu, and a heavy cross marked the inside of the Nuianda Lagoon. Hale? Todd recalled now. That was where a man named Hale had a plantation.

Todd withdrew quickly, pushing the door closed; then remembering that it had not been quite shut, he very cunningly opened it again, slightly.

Ten minutes later Todd, Harry and the sailors were being sent down into the canoe, its wooden cannon still lashed to the bow. They were going ashore, unhurt, as Williams had promised.

In sending them off all that Williams said was:

"The *Astar* will be coming along soon. Remember to tell her, Todd, that I've taken this schooner of yours in payment for a cargo of shell you once took from me."

Todd did not reply, but looked up with a kind of sullen hopefulness. The *Astar* was coming; and he would see to it that the *Astar* knew where to look for Williams. And if he told the *Astar* where to find him, he would have a claim on the reward that followed.

CHAPTER VIII

GHORLAN'S VISITORS

ONE MORNING as Red Ghorlan began his labored tramp on the veranda, swinging back and forth on his crutch, he stopped short and grunted in surprise when he looked down into the harbor where lay a strange schooner that had crept in during the night or very early at dawn, and was now at anchor close off his own beach.

He adjusted his glass to peer at the stranger. Before he got the focus perfectly he saw a woman cross the deck and disappear. Whether a white woman or a native in a white woman's dress, he could not be sure.

The schooner seemed a dirty little trader, dirtier than most, with patched sails dangling slovenly, though she had more men about her deck than most of her kind. Native sailors with pipes in mouths hung at the bulwarks and looked across at Ghorlan's schooner, the *Raccla*, which in the distance was like a child's pretty toy, forgetfully left in a backyard fish pond. There she lay, as unused as if indeed forgotten, moored in shallow water near the channel through the reefs.

As for the stranger schooner, Ghorlan guessed that she had come into the lagoon to find Hale's plantation, which was around the bend on the other side; and not knowing where to find it had come to anchor in Ghorlan's own cove.

The pretty half Chinese Lele came with Ghorlan's breakfast. He, in rather a

merry mood this morning, teased her, and she went away laughing.

Ghorlan, with coffee cup to lips, looked up, listening. Voices were near, coming along up the steep pathway. He twisted about in his chair and looked across his shoulder. Then he put down the cup and, with a ponderous shove on the arms of his chair, arose, took up his crutch and went forward to meet the traders, or whatever they were, off the schooner. The woman, a white woman, was with them.

A man, the youngest among them, tall, haggard and smooth shaven except for a thin mustache with long ends, asked—

"You are Ghorlan?"

"I'm Ghorlan—yes. What do you want?"

The fellow, with a highly affected air of being at ease, touched the tips of his mustache and said—

"We have come to talk with you, Mr. Ghorlan."

"Talk? What about?"

The woman moved forward slightly as if to answer, but the fellow tapped the breast of his dirty white coat, saying:

"A very private matter. Ah, yes, indeed. Very."

At that Ghorlan frowned and looked them over again. An ill favored lot, these three men. Scoundrels, with a kind of menace in their staring. The woman seemed of another caste, but not the less to be distrusted. She was dark, seemed weary, and had brilliant eyes that were somehow tragic.

As for the men, they were surely scoundrels; but of a type that did not much impress Ghorlan who was ruggedly contemptuous of thievish traders and the like. One that he was to hear called Captain Sill was gray of hair and beard, with a cut on his forehead and a slight cast in his eyes. He did not wear a coat and had a revolver on his hip. A mean, lewd, sneaking sort of fellow.

The other of the seamen was known as Boone, a burly man with a flat nose—broken perhaps by fist or club and left unstraightened. He was also without a coat. A knife was thrust down inside his waist band as if to conceal, not the knife, but the length of the blade.

It was the third fellow, plainly not a sailor, that Ghorlan eyed with the most disfavor, seeing the most evil in his face though he dressed the most like a gentleman. He wore a crumpled suit of soiled white duck. His hands were slim and long, and he moved them in meaningless little gestures as if proud of them and wanting it noticed that they were clean and soft.

This fellow with a kind of nervous impudence said—

"Well, Ghorlan, now that you've looked us over carefully, what do you think?"

"A pack o' scoundrels!" Ghorlan answered flatly.

"Don't go callin' names!" the burly Boone shouted.

"Scoundrel yerself!" Sill yelped.

They eyed Ghorlan as if he were an old enemy, long sought, just found.

The woman stood apart from them. She seemed tensely alert, as if ready at any moment with a sweeping gesture to push these men aside and speak.

The impudent fellow, daintily twisting his mustache tips, said:

"It's that word 'scoundrel'. My honest friends here don't like it. But you and me, Ghorlan, being gentlemen, we don't mind being scoundrels, eh?"

"What the devil do you want?" Ghorlan shouted.

"Well, Ghorlan, with your permission—or without it—let us sit down." With a movement of his wrist the fellow who wore his dirty duck with a dandified air, pushed back his coat and tapped a revolver that was there. "Be careful, Ghorlan. Careful. But you won't find us such bad fellows at that!"

The woman, with a brightening look, went hurriedly near the table and, bending over, moved the massive coffee pot.

"Old silver!" she said. "How beautiful!"

Ghorlan turned, glowering, suspecting that she meant to carry it off.

With delicate touch she ran her fingers up and down the moist silver, and murmured, "Old, very old," like one who knew about such things. Then she leaned forward and scrutinized the place where patient scouring had obliterated the design.

"Oh! What can this be?" she exclaimed. "The family crest removed? But I see something—if you turn it just right to the light, this way, here— Oh, but this is strange, Mr. Ghorlan! *Anne of Southern!* Why, that's the ship that went down with all hands, twenty years ago! Homeward bound from India! Her silver service!"

She gazed fixedly at him; and Ghorlan looked just about as a man would look if he stood before some malignant sorceress and felt himself turning to stone.

Then with a wild, ponderous grab he bent forward, caught up the coffee pot and peered with fixed eyes, turning it this way and that, searching for what he already knew was not there.

He dropped the pot, simply opening his hands and letting it fall. It struck the table and fell over, with coffee gushing, then rolled from the edge and dropped to the floor.

With an unsteady step Ghorlan came round to his chair and, letting the crutch fall, sat down heavily. The chair creaked and the force of his weight shook the veranda floor. His eyes, with the look of a man whose eyes have become sightless, were fixed on nothing, straight before him.

The three men grinned evilly, looking at him as gamblers look at a man whom they have tricked out of all he owns, and are soon to be paid.

"Very clever, Louise," the dapper fellow murmured.

But the dark Louise did not smile. She turned toward the dapper Mr. Christopher and, with furtive shake of her head and touching his arm, indicated that he was to take his hand away from his inside coat pocket and keep it away. Her lips formed the words in the lightest of whisper—

"Don't let him know how we know!"

Ghorlan stirred. He swung his head slowly, staring from one to the other; then hoarsely he said—

"Who are you?"

Christopher answered.

"Ah, who am I? Now I might be—" he hesitated cautiously, hoping for the right words—"might be George P. Crespham—" He paused. The name meant nothing to Ghorlan. "But I'm not," Christopher added.

"*Anne of Southern,*" Ghorlan said, nodding slowly. "My brother was lost on her. That's why I feel—he was lost on her, you know. He gave me the service. I rubbed out the name. Couldn't bear it —after he was lost."

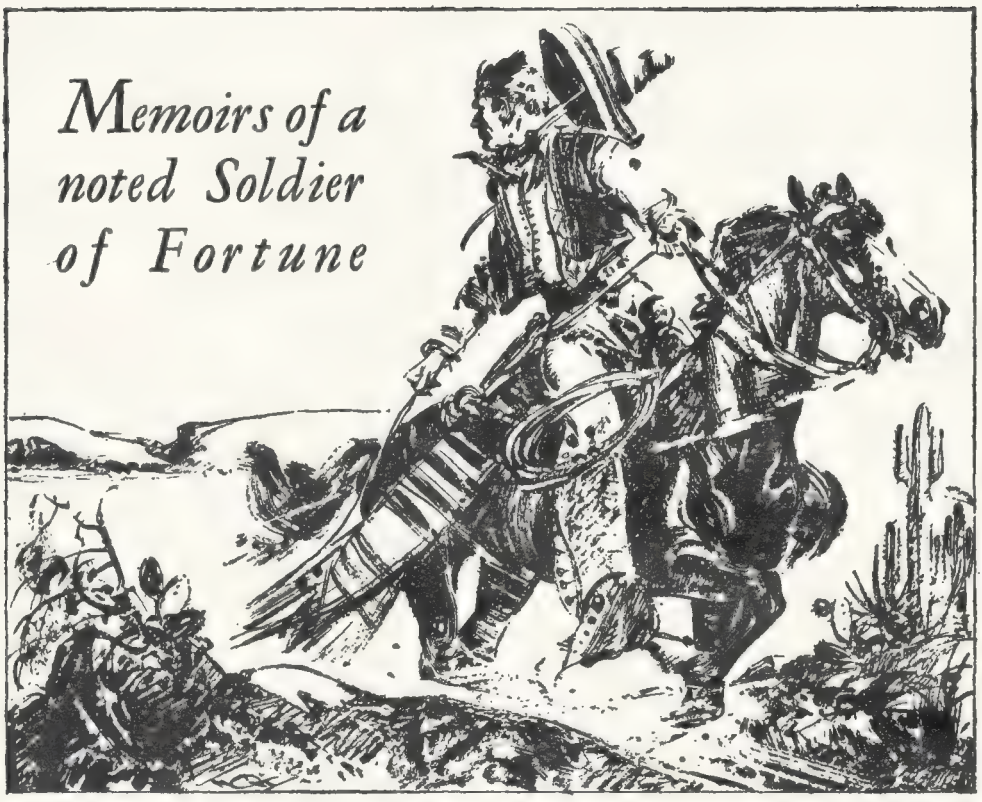
"And the brother's name?" Louise asked quickly.

Ghorlan looked at her from under lowered lids, distrustfully, but answered:

"Frank Ghorlan. Fine fellow—my brother."

"But how could that be, Colonel? You took the name Ghorlan only after you came here! You—" she raised her hand accusingly— "are Colonel Henry Morland. The only white man that survived!"

TO BE CONTINUED



MEXICAN BORDER DAYS

By GENERAL RAFAEL DE NOGALES

AFTER my Honduran experience I went to Mexico with one paramount desire: to die in peace—of a natural death if possible—and to be attended to by undertakers instead of vultures. Although of what possible satisfaction I could be to vultures I could not understand for, notwithstanding the rather unceremonious way in which I had got knocked about the Caribbean, I was still a little conceited. I could not bear the idea of serving the fat bellied buzzards as a mere aperitif.

I was weighing ninety pounds. The spell of malarial fever which I had contracted at La Goajira had been consuming my body until I was practically reduced to skin and bones. I was suffering from jaundice. I was about as far gone as a living carcass can go.

I had sacrificed most of my tail feathers and, but for my timely arrival in Mexico, my earthly remains would probably have been dangling like a wet rag from the lofty branch of a tree, for President Estrada Cabrera of Guatemala had set a price on my head. Nogales, the jaguar that walks alone, had begun to get on his jumpy dictatorial nerves. That was why I had gone seeking peace—of all places—to Mexico. Mexico seemed to be the best refuge my weary bones could find at that moment, especially since bad feeling had recently developed between

Estrada Cabrera and Porfirio Diaz.

Upon hearing of my arrival Diaz not only forgave me for having slipped out from under the guns of his cruiser *Sonora*, off Cozumel Island, and made a clean getaway to Honduras on our schooner *La Rosa*, but had invited me to visit him in the Palacio Nacional.

I found him at the palace roosting like a spider on top of a huge velvet covered club chair. He was sitting with his back to the wall between two enormous windows, a gilded Mexican eagle perched high above his head.

He very politely motioned me to a chair full in the light, where the slightest expression of my face would be observable, and remained himself in the gloom between the bright glare from the windows. I could see that he was scrutinizing me carefully while he chose the words with which he wished to open the conversation. Then he addressed to me a few kind remarks on my health, hoping that the Mexican air would help to restore it. He seemed to be well posted about my recent activities around the Caribbean, which he considered meritorious.

He ended by asking me to join his army because, according to the way he put it, Mexico was walking with giant strides toward a brilliant future—toward the sun! If he had only known what was in store for him he would probably have packed his trunks in a hurry and beat it for Europe at the double. At any rate, it was not up to me to enlighten him. He was old enough to know better. So I politely retorted that in spite of my vehement desire to be of some service to him, I could not possibly accept the commission as a colonel in the Mexican army, which he generously offered, on account of my poor state of health.

Whereupon he observed, in a matter-of-fact way, that, foreseeing that circumstance, he had already wired to General Boyes, governor of Nueva Luzon, announcing my arrival there and asking him to do all he could for me while I remained under his jurisdiction. For Don Porfirio was of the opinion that a few months in the dry desert air would do wonders to my health; would be more than sufficient to get me back on my feet.

In this he was right. For no sooner had I arrived at Nueva Luzon—where General Boyes received me very kindly—than my health began to improve rapidly. After a week or two the swamp fever and yellow jaundice, which were causing me the greatest concern, were practically gone. In a month I was my old self again, could mount a horse and rope a cow, and was as tough as a saddle.

I raced in company of General Boyes' *rurales*—Mexican mounted gendarmerie—across the cactus-strewn plains, sporting the ranchero costume of the land—gold brimmed sombrero, brown *charro* leather riding suit, silver spurs, heavy cartridge belt, six-shooter and *machete*. And I loved to handle the smooth rawhide rope that dangled from my flat saddle horn, while my heavy silver inlaid spurs clanked at my heels and the dust cloud raised by a bunch of stampeding cows went creeping slowly over the sun baked plain or the glittering surface of the distant, whitish alkali flats.

The process of transformation from little Lieutenant de Nogales, in the Algonquin Club, Boston, to the future Nevada Mendez, cowpuncher and Alaska sourdough, was making rapid strides.

AFTER this vacation, General Boyes called me aside one evening and said that he had a confidential and very important mission for me. He wanted me to bring from El Paso a number of boxes containing dynamite and other explosives intended for road building, and which the government, for undivulged reasons, had ordered him to keep in hiding at a ranch. Owing to the heat and the explosive nature of the cargo, my escort and I would have to travel after dark.

Boyes advised me to blaze away at any one who should try to approach us or offered the slightest opposition to our passage because, according to reports he claimed he had received from Mexico

City, there was a band of desperadoes masquerading as *rurales* along the border states who might try to get hold of those explosives in order to blow up trains, bridges, etc.

All this was good news to me. In less than a week I hit the trail north at the head of fourteen well equipped *charros*, who could find their way through the deserts in the dark. The object of our trip was to be kept secret, according to instructions, even from the *rurales* and the Mexican Border authorities. Therefore, we only traveled at night, camping during the day at the bottom of washouts or rock strewn cañons, where there was no danger of anybody's discovering us.

During our twelve days' journey we did not stop but at two ranches, to purchase food and rest our horses. Every cloud of dust, every sand devil that whirled along the dusty horizon, caused us to stop short in our tracks and hide our horses in the nearest ravine. I was resolved to risk a running fight, or to cross the Border into the United States. Falling into the hands of the desperadoes would have meant death possibly, and certainly failure. And I had made up my mind to see the thing through at whatever the cost.

One of the two *haciendas* where we stopped in Chihuahua belonged to Governor Cachazas, a very wealthy man. He was the owner of hundreds of thousands of head of cattle, a veritable Crœsus. He had massed his fortune at the expense of the people of the Border states by depriving them arbitrarily of their water rights and rich grazing lands. During the many years in which Diaz had remained in power Cachazas had taken advantage of his political influence in order to increase his myriad herds of cows, sheep and horses. Don Porfirio's bloodhounds, the *rurales*, were ever ready to give him a helping hand. He had had no difficulty in running Chihuahua to suit himself.

Consequently, as soon as the Flores-Magon and Madero revolutions had got well under way, several years later, every rebel leader, from Pancho Villa up and down, considered himself authorized to confiscate Cachazas' famous cows because, according to public opinion, Cachazas had acquired those herds at the expense of the Mexican proletariat along the Border states.

When we reached the Rancho de la Candelaria, one of the famous orgies thrown by Torribio, the Cachazas' heir, was in progress. Barrels of tequila, cases of champagne, whole roasted cows and the company of ladies of all shades and colors were to be enjoyed, for the pretty girls of the neighboring ranches were always invited to Torribio's *parrandas*.

Those parties, which lasted sometimes for a week, had made Torribio famous. Some old-timers claimed that the governor had been a pretty hot tamale himself during his younger days.

Immediately after our arrival at the Candelaria ranch we were accosted by a crowd of several dozen guests who were celebrating Torribio's birthday, which had been several days before. As the ranch had been declared "safe" by General Boyes and nobody seemed to be interested in knowing whence we hailed or where we were headed, I accepted Torribio's invitation to stay over night and join the party, especially as a charming señorita gently lifted her glass to me.

My pleasant acquaintance with Doña Inez kept me three days at Torribio's *parranda*—dancing, drinking and having a thoroughly good time.

About a week later we crossed the Rio Grande a few miles from El Paso Juarez, and installed ourselves in the ranch where the cargo of explosives was supposed to be concealed. I found it in a spacious cave, the entrance of which had been cleverly camouflaged.

While my men were busy roping in the pack mules and making all the necessary preparations for our return, I went with my orderly, José, to the border village of La Esmeralda to do some scouting and see if the road was clear. I was carrying my roll of greenbacks tucked away in the leg of one of my high heeled riding boots when we entered the only *cantina*, or saloon, of La Esmeralda.

WE HAD hardly joined the crowd at the bar when a sharp, commanding voice shouted in familiar Americanese—

"Stick them up, boys!"

Instantly our arms shot skyward for, to judge by the ring in his voice, that lone wolf meant business. When it was my turn to deposit my money on the sideboard behind which the masked desperado had entrenched himself, he seemed to look me over with surprise, and relented a bit. In a slow, drawling voice he demanded—

"How on earth did you get mixed up with that bunch of coyotes, kid?"

"Just by chance," I retorted in an even voice. "That little Mex and I just happened to cross the Border to have a social drink, that's all."

"If that's the case," said the two-gun man, "keep your coin and be welcome to the United States. If you need any money help yourself from that pile. There's a-plenty for both of us!"

No wonder I have always loved the Western deserts, where even the outlaws are gentlemen.

There were great doings at El Paso when we got there. A cowpuncher convention was being held at Juarez. Most of the well known cowhands and broncho busters from Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, Chihuahua and Coahuila were assembled there, having a glorious time. There were roping and bucking contests, and both towns—Juarez lies across the river—were teeming with strangers, tourists and tenderfeet who busied themselves buying curios, eating chile-con-carne or having themselves photographed for a dime in cowboy costumes which would have made our cayuses roll over with laughter if they had only had a chance to look at them.

In the midst of these goings on I became transitorily famous. For upon waking up one morning with a head as big as a house, I was informed that I had won second prize in the roping contest by a daring feat.

Only after I had sobered up sufficiently to realize where I was did I finally remember, in a sort of hazy way, how I had been hanging in the saddle on my little cross-eyed Mexican cayuse Cristalina the day before, and how, of a sudden, a yellow streak, followed by a cloud of dust, had dashed past me like a thunderbolt; whereupon Cristalina, pricking up her ears and shaking her little legs, had made a bee-line for the cow's tail end.

From what I heard later I had roped the creature all right and had thrown her properly, but the pull on the rope had apparently been so healthy that it had caused us both, Cristalina and myself, to go spinning through the air like a couple of sky rockets.

Luckily my cayuse, which was as sober as a judge, managed to get back on her feet with lightning speed, and had kept pulling on the rope, while I had made a dash—crawling on hands and knees—for the kicking cow, and had tied its legs almost in record time.

So it was really Cristalina and not I who had won the prize.

When José and I returned to the ranch we found everything ready for our departure. This took place that same evening. But instead of returning the way we had come we followed the line of the Rio Grande to El Paso del Aguila, so as to be able to cross the Border in case of danger. Near El Paso del Aguila we veered due south and never stopped until we reached Nueva Luzon, where we cached our forty boxes of "something" in a ranch, as per instructions.

It was only then that José, who had taken a liking to me, told me secretly what those boxes really contained. It was not dynamite, but cartridges, and they were intended for use against Diaz in a rebellion which Boyes was planning. José advised me, therefore, very seriously, to hit the trail for the United States as fast as I could, unless I wanted to see myself involved in that affair.

In other words, Boyes had been using me good and proper. He had put me into the position, unconsciously, of betraying the confidence of the man who, for whatever reason, had befriended me. The fact remained that Porfirio Diaz had been very kind to me and that I had paid back his

kindness, without knowing it, in a way which was neither chivalrous nor soldierly. For, in spite of all his defects, and the ruinous political system which he maintained—which I fought several years later—Porfirio Diaz was a gentleman and, within his sphere, a great man.

Under the circumstances there was only one thing left for me to do. I had to ride Cristalina to death in an attempt to reach the Border. General Boyes, as soon as he found out that I had taken my leave, would have his *rurales* after me to silence me, perhaps by stringing me to a tree; more probably by having me buried alive in an ants' nest.

That brought me to the cowpuncher period of my life, one that I would not have missed for all the gold and honors in the world. I entered the honorable profession in the Panhandle and the Sierra de Sangre. Later I rode also in Nevada and Arizona. From the former State I derived my nickname, Nevada Mendez. The buckaroos could pronounce that name, which was my mother's, better than De Ynchauspe or De Nogales.

I remained in the Western deserts for quite awhile, enjoying the life of a real man, until one fatal morning when I ran afoul of the "Thou Shalt Not Kill" passage of Holy Scripture. It happened like this.

Tim O'Reilly, generally known as Lanky, was a daredevil of a fellow and a tough citizen in every respect. He carried a habitual chip on his shoulder and was usually "boozed up to the gills." The butt of his gun sported several notches: the only notches which I ever saw during my cowpuncher days, for "notches," "shooting from the hip" and "shooting a man between the eyes" are terms which belong in the realm of myth, at least so far as the old-time buckaroos are concerned.

Yet, Lanky was a real buckaroo, no doubt about that. There was no better cowhand for miles around when it came to breaking up a stampede. That was the time when we all had to take off our sombreros to Lanky. During those stormy nights, when the thunder went rolling like a barrage fire over the pitch-dark plains, when thousands of terrified longhorns went crashing and dashing along like a black tidal wave, into that phosphorescent roaring inferno, fantastically lighted up by the glare of lightning—then it was that Lanky showed his prowess, blazing away with a six-shooter in each hand, wearing off the shoes of his pinto mustang while trying to head off our herd of cows from the dreaded Lone Cañon, opening before us like the gaping jaws of a monster.

Those were natural occurrences in those happy days of the open range, when sheepmen and tenderfeet were still scarce in those parts of God's own country. Every time I look back to those bygone days I can not help feeling lonesome and old, very old.

ONE MORNING, after such a hair raising stampede, during which Lanky had behaved magnificently, we were sitting cross-legged on our saddle blankets, in front of our grub wagon, enjoying a stack of flapjacks, coffee and chunks of jerked meat, when it occurred to Lanky to bring out a deck of cards and a gallon of "rat poison." Lanky started the ball rolling.

I felt so tired after that all night ride that I had decided to lie down for awhile, to nurse my various bumps and bruises, for I had rolled over several times with Sweety, my lop eared cayuse, and felt really ashamed for having been spilled. So I grouchily rolled myself up in my blanket, after breakfast, and lay down under a mesquite bush.

In the meantime Lanky, who had already enjoyed several drinks, kept bothering me until he wound up by insinuating that the real reason why I did not want to play cards was perhaps because I was afraid to lose the beans. That settled that, of course.

I could not help liking Lanky in a decided manner. But his way of talking was usually so mortifying that I had to swallow hard at times in order to control myself.

Frenchy, who was the funny boy of the outfit, seemed to have scented the impending storm, for he hurriedly started relating the story of a grizzly bear hunt which we had managed to pull off a few days before.

While Frenchy kept commenting on the hunt Lanky had swallowed enough alcohol to keep a fair sized engine running for awhile. He became ornery and nasty. Around and around circulated the gallon. And when the first gallon was declared dead, Doc Smith, our cook, dug up a new one from Lord knows where.

As often happens when a man doesn't want to gamble, luck was on my side. Greenbacks and silver dollars kept piling up sky high in front of me, while Lanky, who had practically forced me into the game with his nasty remarks, was soon reaching down for his bottom dollar. Which means the game was approaching rapidly the danger line.

Lanky seemed to have kept his peace so far only because he knew by experience that when I had had a few drinks too many myself and refused to answer fool questions, something was likely to happen. And it did happen.

With a snarl, similar to the she-bear's Frenchy had been talking about, Lanky jumped suddenly to his feet and, pointing at me with a shaky hand, bellowed:

"Confound you, Kid. You have been playing with four aces down and one up your sleeve. Confess it!"

"You are a liar!" I howled back.

Instantly he drew, but I happened to be quicker on the trigger that time.

The row seemed to have sobered Lanky up some. He was lying on the ground, holding his side with both hands. The wild look in his steel gray eyes softened. They saddened. And wiping off with the back of his hand a thin streak of blood which was trickling from a corner of his mouth, he muttered feebly:

"Forgive me, Kid, I didn't mean it. It was just a case of bad liquor."

"That's where you said a mouthful, Lanky," I replied with a lump in my throat.

Since then I have never touched a card again.

Although the boys agreed with me that I had acted in self-defense, I thought it best to saddle my horse and ride into the bush, for somehow or other the memory of the dying look in Lanky's boyish face haunted me. I felt at odds with my inner self despite the fact that the law was on my side; because I realized, perhaps for the first time in my life, that human laws are as nothing when compared with that other tremendous law that rules the universe—conscience.

In Yuma I sold my horse and whatever else I could spare of my outfit. And in San Francisco, with what other little means I could scrape together, I took passage for China on a tramp steamer.

After five eventful years which I spent mostly in China, Alaska and Nevada, I found myself once more on the Mexican Border. The famous Flores-Magon revolution, in which I had taken an active part, was drawing to its end. With only a handful of my surviving *compañeros* I was roaming the deserts of Chihuahua in the hope that things might pick up again. I was carrying in my pocket a letter which Francisco Madero, the future president of Mexico, had sent me to Caño Santa Catalina by the original Old Pancho Villa, who was, by the way, a perfect gentleman: not a cowardly and bloodthirsty hyena like his successor, Arango, whom the gang baptized later "Pancho Villa" to perpetuate the name of their old chieftain.

In his letter (which must be still in Caracas, unless Juan Vicente Gomez's secret police destroyed it together with the rest of my private correspondence) Madero entreated me not to throw up the sponge.

"They call me an *iluso* (visionary)," he protested in the letter, "but I am not. My plans are working out splendidly. Hold out until I can raise the banner of revolt and Mexico will be free. You are the last *chispa* (spark) of *la revolución!*"

To judge by Madero's encouraging letter the spark of revolt was not quite dead and something of real importance might

happen. I felt that our Flores-Magon uprising was only the forerunner of mightier events. And I was not mistaken. Less than a year later, under Madero, the tremendous revolution which ended Porfirio Diaz's régime and put an end to peonage in Mexico, had broken out.

Encouraged by Madero's optimistic message, I decided not to disband my men. But our situation was growing critical. We had run entirely out of food. We did not dare approach the villages and cattle ranches for fear of falling into an ambush. The *rurales* were clever scouts and relentless foes. Had it not been for my knowledge of the country and my system of prowling only at night, we would have ended our parts on earth with a lariat around our necks or in front of a firing squad.

DURING one of these anxious nights, when the *rurales* were pressing close and had us practically cut off from any possible retreat; that is, while we were fighting our way from the Rio Grande to our headquarters in the Santa Catalina Cañon, we ran into a convoy of pack mules led by a dozen Chinese smugglers. The minute they saw us they threw themselves flat on their faces, whining and begging for mercy. They had mistaken us for *rurales*. On their mules were about ten thousand pesos worth of opium, which they offered us if we spared their lives.

While the terrified Chinamen knelt in front of us, huddled together, alternately raising and lowering their arms, like a bunch of rabbits moving their ears back and forth, I could not help laughing outright in spite of the critical situation which we were in. Those chaps certainly looked funny. I explained to them who we really were and asked them to sell us some grub.

With their Oriental impassivity the Chinese fished out of their pack saddles several stacks of tortillas and many bottles of tequila which they handed us, together with a small tin of opium, as a present, for myself and each of my men. These we sold afterward near Chihuahua for five or ten dollars apiece.

After shaking hands our Chinese friends lined up their mules and disappeared in the shadows of the night, while we broke up and scattered, each man for himself. I managed to slip undetected through the iron ring which the *rurales* had been quietly drawing about us, and most of my men were as successful.

One of our favorite meeting places was a thicket near the southern shore of the Laguna de Patos, where some of Governor Cachazas' cowpunchers used to supply us with food and fresh horses. For we were very popular along the Border states because we always paid for or gave something in exchange for what we got. The magnificent saddlehorse, for instance, which I was riding, had been presented to me by Orosco (later General Orosco). He and the presidents of Mexico (with the possible exception of Madero and Victoriano Huerta) who succeeded Porfirio Diaz, as well as the majority of the leading soldiers and politicians in Mexico today, were still enjoying in those days the quiet life of plain citizens and nonentities.

In order to reach our rendezvous I had to spend the next day in hiding, in a certain arroyo in the Sierra del Fierro, where I knew I could hold out single handed against a whole squadron of Mexican cavalry.

After sunset, when the sky was paling from purple to lavender, I saddled my horse and started to feel my way through the darkness.

An hour later a dark blotch loomed in front of me. Approaching it, I discovered a band of sixty to seventy coyotes, motionless, eying me critically, almost blocking my way.

Coyotes, of course, are the most cowardly creatures one can find in those parts, except when they have the rabies or during the mating season, when the barren summits of the Sierra Madre begin to blanch and the cold northern gales blow over the desert. At that time the coyotes are wont to band together under the leadership of an experienced male—one who

has tasted the warm blood of livestock—and then they are apt to become dangerous, at least to stray horses.

The present incumbents of my attention were led by a big fellow which resembled a wolf more than a coyote, and they did not seem inclined to give me the right of way. I could have scattered them with a single shot, but I did not dare to advertise my presence thus. The *rurales* were still at my heels. So I untied my rope and, swinging its knotted end over my head, I literally whipped my way through the carrion eaters. Still, they would not let up, but followed me with dogged patience, their eyes glowing like emeralds in the night.

Although they showed no particular desire to attack me I did not relish their company a bit and, coming upon an abandoned Spanish cemetery at the bottom of a dry gulch, I closed its iron gate and barricaded myself within its four walls which were still intact and too high for coyotes to jump.

The inner sides of the walls were lined with rows of niches, some of them closed, still containing corpses. Several graves in the yard had been broken open. As I waded through the briers I stumbled repeatedly on skulls and bones. It was not exactly an inviting place, but there was grass in abundance and it was protected.

After I had turned my horse loose and eaten my last two tortillas I wrapped myself up in my saddle blanket and turned in—which means, I crawled into one of the empty niches, which smelled anything but pleasant, and went to sleep. While out in the sagebrush the coyotes were whining, and the stars overhead went on sparkling and shining in the black-blue expanse of the desert sky.

Several days later I met my men at the appointed place, south of Laguna de Patos, but our friends, the cowpunchers, had not made their appearance, probably because the *rurales* were hovering about.

Our situation was far from enviable. For nearly four days we had been subsisting only on tequila. And our horses, exhausted from hard riding, had only been able to nibble at dry grass here and there.

Realizing that we had to get food no matter how, I decided to borrow some provisions from one of the passenger trains which was scheduled to leave Ciudad Juarez for Chihuahua next day. Somewhere near Carrizales we fixed up things in such a way that when the so-called Chihuahua Express reached that neighborhood it was forced to stop because a pile of ties was obstructing the road. And when it tried to back away it met with a similar obstacle, cutting off its retreat.

WHEN the train had come to a standstill, I had the crew covered and, advancing with three men, I requested the passengers to step out and form in line. We were not bandits, we explained, but patriots, *revolucionarios*, and we did not want to steal but simply to purchase food.

While I was standing in front of the frightened passengers—my face covered with a polka dotted handkerchief—explaining things in a hurry because the *rurales* were ever on our heels, a slip of a Mexican señorita, with beautiful black eyes (a student in an American university on her way to spend her holidays at home) stepped forth of a sudden, and, tearing the handkerchief from my face, shouted in an excited voice:

"How dare you, silly bandit, to hold up our train to rob these poor people and scare their children to death? Have you no heart? Why don't you go to work and earn an honest living? You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

I took off my sombrero, and bowed and urged upon her our sincerity—we were not bandits, stupid or otherwise, I protested anew, but *patriotas, revolucionarios* compelled to purchase our food in this somewhat dramatic manner because we could not enter the settlements. I handed her a roll of bills and asked her to do the shopping for us.

"Who are you, anyway?" she asked me somewhat taken aback.

When I answered Nogales, an almost imperceptible smile passed over her handsome face, and she added in a whisper—

"Why did you not say that before?"

No money was asked. The dining car was emptied for us, and ten minutes later the Chihuahua Express was puffing south at full speed. The passengers, I suppose, were lost in wonder at the peculiar robber—or revolutionist for that matter—who wanted to pay in cash for what he could get for nothing.

That night in a lonely cañon of the nearby mountains, a band of Mexican patriots lay resting about a huge camp fire, while their skinny cayuses were enjoying a big feed of barley.

Several weeks after our "holdup" I awoke with a shiver. It was a rather chilly morning after a sleepless night, for somehow or other I could not forget the tragic end of my faithful orderly, José, who had been captured the day before by the *rurales* near the frontier hamlet of La Asuncion.

They had strung him up to the only tree for many miles around. But José had died game. According to what a villager told me, who had witnessed the execution, José had placed the noose around his own neck in order to save the hangman the trouble. José had gone smiling into eternity with both hands struck in his trouser pockets and a lighted cigaret in his mouth.

José had been the first of my old Nueva Luzon gang to join me after the Nevada boom, when I had started gathering that little bunch of *borrowed cows* south of the border line to help finance our later Flores-Magon revolution.

That was the time when Governor Cachazas had come within an inch of sprouting wings and going up in smoke, for José had him covered while I answered some of his impertinent questions by frankly confessing that every one of those cows had originally belonged to him. Whereupon Governor Cachazas, the cunning old fox, had patted me on the back, with a patronizing smile on his bewhiskered brown face, and said—probably on account of the proximity of José's gun:

"Good for you, Don Rafael. That is the way I got started in the cattle business myself!"

It was a rather chilly morning, as I said. An occasional sand-devil was crawling lazily along the dusty horizon. And when the glowing sun loosened itself from the rim of the desert, we shook the dust off our saddle blankets, cinched up our horses, and rode carefully up to the nearby Tunas station of the Southern Pacific railroad to get some flapjacks, coffee, and to forget, for awhile at least, that we were wanted south of the Border, for we were the last militant troop of the Flores-Magon insurrection, and realized that Porfirio Diaz would not feel at ease until the last man of that premature but glorious movement had been downed.

John Dee, the station cook—who, by the way, was neither a Chinese nor a cook but a Japanese officer doing intelligence work along the Border—had spread out some old newspapers in front of us to serve as a tablecloth.

On one of those papers (which I still preserve) I noticed two familiar faces, topped by silk hats. One of those faces belonged to President Castro of Venezuela, the other to Vice-President Juan Vicente Gomez. There was a two column news story telling how Castro had left for Berlin for his health—I knew what that meant in my country—and that Gomez, now president, called upon all the Venezuelans abroad to return at once, to aid him in restoring normal political conditions.

I am not ashamed to confess that after reading that story there were tears in my eyes. Wide gates seemed to have opened unexpectedly in front of me. The moment for which I had been waiting for the past eight years had arrived at last. If I did not get shot the last moment, I would see my native land once more.

I took leave of my faithful companions and two months later during the latter part of December, 1909, I arrived in Caracas, the capital city of Venezuela, after the eight eventful years of my first voluntary exile.

AMOK *in the* BAZAAR

By WM. ASHLEY ANDERSON

AT THE beginning of the affair, two Sepoys—Punjabis—shot an *askari* who attempted to interfere with them as they were coming away from Beyt-el-Ajaib. I heard the crowd by the Customs shouting, but I did not know at the moment what was going on. Ali, my broker, was nearer.

At about four o'clock the Sepoys turned into the bazaar filled with unholy joy at the prospect before them. At the shop of Damoder Jerab they found the Khoja manager sitting on a stool, fat and warm and bland. One of the Sepoys shot him in the stomach instantly killing him. Immediately shopkeepers everywhere sprang to life, slamming and barring their doors, flinging up their shutters with a great clatter. All in the alleyways scuttled for shelter.

One Banian, trying to slip softly unseen down a dark, moist alleyway, was spied by one of the Sepoys who drove a bullet through his shoulder; it traversed his chest and came out the opposite side. The man sprawled in a bloody heap, dead. In the sudden appalled silence there were stirrings, whisperings, choked cries, the tinkle of silver and rattle of brasses behind the dank walls. In a few instants the narrow wet alleys were deserted, except for a few old men and women too stunned to act quickly; and a few children who were lost in the swift panic.

Four women came to an upper window. At any other time they might have made a pretty picture, looking down into the stirring bazaar, a spot of color under a Byzantine arch, with a drab background; but now they were terrified and full of anxiety for their children. The black bearded Sepoy lifted his rifle and fired at them as they threw themselves aside just in time to escape.

Ali Bhanji saw his child in the street and rushed out to draw him to safety. At this moment another little boy, seeing all the doors closing about him, threw himself against Dharsey's great, brass studded door, crying out: "Mihammed Ali Dharsey, open the door! Help!"

While the little fellow beat frantically at the door, a Sepoy saw him and deliberately shot him; but the bullet passed through the flesh of the thigh, and subsequently the boy recovered. This Sepoy now discovered Ali drawing his boy into shelter and would have shot him also, but by the time he had jerked the bolt back, Ali and his child were safely behind a door.

When the two had used up all their ammunition—which, I think, could not have consisted of more than a clip apiece—except for one bullet each, they walked a short distance farther until they came to a convenient *barasa* at the door of a shop kept by an old woman. Quite coolly they told the old woman to shut her door. This she did in great fear. But when the door was closed and the street clear, the two Sepoys sat down a short distance from each other and, aiming to kill each other, they pulled the triggers simultaneously.

Both fell mortally wounded.

So these two hillmen, born and reared in some remote hamlet on the snowy slopes of Himalayan foothills, found their deaths when the blood madness came upon them in the steaming bazaars of Zanzibar. What would several hundred thousand of them do in the bazaars of Hindustan?

"Phew," said Ali Bhanji, mopping his brow at the recollection, when he had finished giving me his version. "Suppose I deaded! How very near you not can able make business today!"

By GEORGE E. HOLT

The TOUCH of a HAND

A Tale of Morocco

THAT Barbary state of North Africa known as Morocco was in a turmoil. The reigning youthful sultan had, in the opinion of his subjects, gone very much Christian, which is to say that he surrounded himself with faithless European intriguers whose ulterior motive was to loot Morocco, went in for photography, which is forbidden by the Koran, and entertained himself with automobiles and similar contrivances of the devil. Wherefore a more sincere Moslem, in the person of his half brother, had raised the flag of rebellion, chased the sultan from his throne and thus created a mild form of anarchy. This was the signal for always rebellious tribes to get very busy, and for European adventurers of the worst class to swarm to Morocco, increasing the disturbance.

It was a time when, as America would say, "anything went." And "anything" in this case meant the most stupid as well as the most brilliant plots and counter-plots; the most subtle as well as the most violent attacks and counter-attacks. Shady characters with incredible plans moved secretly or noisily about their affairs; the great were abruptly pulled down, and with equal speed others arose from the gutters to seize power and authority. Men died suddenly. The secret agents of European powers traveled mysteriously about, and *agents provocateurs* infested the land, stirring up trouble. As there were no telephones, telegraphs or radio, no motor cars and practically no roads, nobody knew very much about what was really taking place.

It was at an hour when the Western world would just have been having morning coffee—but when North Africa had already been long astir, to get its work done before the heat of the day—that a man came from the doorway of a squat white house on the outskirts of the little coast town of Dar-el-Baida and climbed heavily on to a sturdy black horse which a Moorish urchin had been holding in the shade of a clump of oleanders.

The man moved heavily, swung into the saddle heavily, because he was short and fat. Even that slight exertion made him puff. He was of Teutonic aspect, florid of large, smooth shaven face, blue of eyes which were small and seemingly nearsighted. He wore badly fitting riding clothes of khaki, clothes which would have told an experienced African traveler that they had recently made a long, hard journey. His head was protected by a white sun helmet. He grasped the reins which the urchin tossed over the horse's head, flung a copper coin to the boy, and clattered slowly away over the cobbles of the street toward the more central portion of the town. Now and then he consulted a silver watch attached to a heavy gold chain, but each time he seemed satisfied with what he saw. Aside from this action he rode without seeming to perceive anything about him, rode as a man pondering some enterprise which excluded thought of all other things, yet which marched in a satisfactory manner.

After riding for perhaps twenty minutes he entered a narrow street into which the sun had not yet penetrated. At the end of the street, which was not much over a hundred feet in length, he saw the shield of the American consular agency hanging over an arched doorway. In the archway squatted a native consular guard, who rose as the rider approached.

The man on horseback seemed to reduce the horse's pace, to study the guard from eyes which squinted, to be awaiting some action on the part of the native which would tell him something he desired to learn. But the native merely waited, without motion, without change of expression, until the rider reached him, when he nodded, seized the bridle for the man to dismount.

"Your master, the consul, has arrived?" The rider's voice was deep, guttural, with an unpleasant rasp in it. He still sat on the horse.

"Yes, *sidi*," responded the guard, moving a little to keep the horse from nibbling at the immaculate white robe which fell from shoulder to heel. "Yes, my master the consul is in his office."

"Tell him one desires to see him," commanded the man, and thereupon swung to the ground.

The guard hitched the horse to a convenient ring in the wall, led the way into a spacious patio beyond the archway.

"Will you be pleased to wait here, *sidi*?" asked the guard, motioning to a reed chair beneath a palm tree. "I shall inform the consul of your desire."

The man nodded, dropped heavily into the chair, got out a package of cheap cigarets and lighted one. But his gaze followed the white robed guard as he crossed the patio and entered, through one of the half dozen French doors which gave light and air to the offices beyond them. The man's eyes did not appear to be good; but dimly in that office he could perceive the white robed guard and

the upper portion of the body of a young man sitting behind a flat topped desk. After a moment he drew from his inner coat pocket a legal looking document which he unfolded and inspected critically. Then he nodded.

"All in perfect order," he muttered.

He started to return the paper to his pocket, then let the hand holding it fall back upon his huge thigh.

"The gentleman to speak with you, sir," the guard told the man behind the desk who looked up, frowned, glanced out of the window and saw the fat man in the chair.

"Well, send him in," he said.

The guard salaamed and went forth, while the consul hurriedly collected certain important looking documents from the desk top and stowed them away in a drawer.

The consul was Barry Kane. He now occupied the consular office at Dar-el-Baida only because of an emergency. He was really American vice-consul general at Tangier, but circumstances had taken him far from his usual post. He was a slim, lithe young man in his middle twenties, his clean cut face already somewhat browned by the African sun, his gray eyes keen and restless. The nervous, active type. Such a man as Africa may do strange works upon. At the consul general's instructions he had had to leave that very comfortable—and, at the moment, fairly quiet—town, to hasten to Dar-el-Baida by the fortnightly boat, this being preferable to the week's overland journey by caravan.

The cause of his mission to Dar-el-Baida was twofold. The consul general had just received word of the sudden death of the American consular agent there, a Jew named Nahon.

Ordinarily the decease of a consular agent would not have demanded the prompt appointment of some one else to represent the United States in any Moroccan town, because American interests there were not great. But in this particular instance, conditions were different. There resided in Dar-el-Baida one Abd-el-Malek, a Moroccan by birth, an American by naturalization, and the wealthiest man in the Shawia Province.

Even this would not have caused the consul general to send his vice-consul hotfoot to Dar-el-Baida. But at this particular moment Abd-el-Malek had a deal on which made him of considerable importance not only in Moroccan affairs, but in the eyes of the American State Department at Washington.

ABD-EL-MALEK had secured options upon mining properties in Morocco which, if assembled, would have been about the size of the State of Rhode Island. These properties had a potential value of many millions of dollars. And they would represent practically the only American interests of any importance in the entire country.

Before Abd-el-Malek closed on his options he wanted—had to have—the promise of the American Government that his interests would be protected, that he would be granted, as a naturalized citizen who may not reside in the country of his birth for more than two years at a time, a special dispensation as regarded residence, if such became necessary.

The consul general had had favorable word from Washington. This word had to be officially and quickly delivered to Abd-el-Malek. The consular agent was dead—hence Barry Kane was in Dar-el-Baida.

Arriving there, he had sought out the Moor, delivered the necessary official papers and had then proceeded to inquire into the death of the consular agent, Nahon. But of that he learned nothing, save that the Jew apparently had died of apoplexy after a hearty meal.

Thus, his work done, Barry Kane decided not to wait a week or longer for the boat, but to assemble a small caravan and start for Tangier overland. He was now engaged in this last minute business when his visitor was announced. The fat man, carrying his document, entered the room and removed his helmet.

"I'm Gratz," he said gutturally. "Herman Gratz, and this is my appointment as American consular agent here."

He held out a fat and hairy hand. Barry Kane grasped it, and was conscious of releasing it very quickly, because of a strangely repugnant impression it gave him. He was sensitive about hands, was Kane. Nor did he like the man's eyes; without being shifty, they seemed just to miss squarely meeting his own.

"Well," he said, "glad to see you. You must have come overland. How's the road?"

"Of course," replied Gratz. "I had no trouble . . . So this is the agency office, eh?"

Barry Kane opened the official letter from the consul general at Tangier. It was three lines of typing, appointing one Herman Gratz to be American consular agent at Dar-el-Baida during the consul general's pleasure; signed and stamped with the consular seal. Kane put it into his pocket. It wasn't, he reflected, very good policy to appoint non-Americans to such posts, because they couldn't be expected to work for the extension of American trade, nor to be too active in protecting American interests in case one of their own countrymen was involved. But thus far all the American consular agents were non-Americans; in fact there were no American residents to be appointed. And as the posts paid practically nothing in direct remuneration, no American from home was ever available. One agent was an Englishman, another an Austrian. No reason why the one at Dar-el-Baida shouldn't be a German, as Herman Gratz indubitably was . . .

But Barry Kane decided not to mention to Mr. Gratz the details of Abd-el-Malek's business. Not just now. He wanted time to think that over.

He turned his attention back to the new official, who was now shuffling about, examining the office and its equipment. He studied the back of the short, heavy figure, and found himself feeling again the distasteful touch of the big hand. No, he didn't like the man, that was certain. Nevertheless, Mr. Gratz was the American consular agent, and as such there were matters to be gone over with him. Gratz turned promptly at his summons, seated himself, and Kane began giving the instructions and information necessary. Gratz listened, nodding from time to time, but without manifest interest. Now and then he shrugged irritably, said, "Yes, yes; of course," as though all that Kane was telling him was childish, or as though he had things of more importance on his mind.

"You don't seem much interested," said Kane, exasperated at last.

"Oh, sure—sure, I'm interested. I'm listening. Maybe I smoke, eh?" Thereupon he produced his package of cigarets and lighted one. "Go on now, Mr. Consul; I'm listening."

Barry Kane continued, disliking the man more than ever. The fat man who sat so stodgily in the chair, eyes closed, a cigaret thrust half its length into his thick lipped mouth—the way many men carry cigars, but few, cigarets. But—the Government had to take what it could get in a place like this.

Kane finished at last, rose, picked up cap and riding crop.

"We might as well get out of here," he said, his nose insulted by his companion's tobacco. "Want to take a ride around town?" One had to be decent—even to a fellow like this.

"No," Gratz grunted. "No; not me. I'll stay here. You go."

"Right," snapped Kane, irritated at the man's gruffness. "Hope you enjoy yourself." He strode toward the door, spurs jangling in tune with his nerves.

And now there came running breathlessly to the consular office a brown native whom Barry Kane recognized as a servant at the house of Abd-el-Malek.

"*Sidi! Sidi Consul!*" gasped the Moor. "Come at once! My master is dead!"

"What?" exclaimed Kane, "Sidi Abd-el-Malek—dead?"

"Yes, *sidi:* yes. He lies on the floor, holding a pistol. And there is a hole in

his breast. *Aweely! Aweely!* Will you not come with me, Sidi Consul?"

"At once," replied Barry Kane. Here was trouble. Here was a lot of trouble. He was conscious of a hurt in his breast; he had liked Abd-el-Malek. "I suppose," he said, turning to Gratz, "that as the new incumbent you'd better come along."

Gratz nodded, and Kane was surprised at the change that came over him. The lethargy was gone. Gratz was on his feet like a man who has awaited a signal.

"Yes," he said, "I suppose I'll have to handle it. Especially as you're ready to leave for Tangier." He cast a quick, sidelong look at his superior, seeming to await a reply to what had not been a question.

"It'll be up to you, I suppose," agreed Kane. "As a matter of fact, I'm no longer in charge, since you presented your order of appointment. But—" No, he wouldn't say anything about Abd-el-Malek's affairs just yet. "But I'll go along with you. Malek was a good sort. I can't believe—"

At the house of the Moor they found that the hand of death had indeed descended. Abd-el-Malek lay quite dead upon the floor of his salon. He was in purple velvet house dress, long jacket and baggy trousers. He lay on his back, arms outflung. The curled and stiffened fingers of one hand grasped a revolver. His eyes stared upward. There was a bullet hole through the velvet of his jacket just over the heart.

BARRY KANE gazed with a feeling of nausea. Death, sudden death, was incredible until one actually faced it. And Abd-el-Malek had been a fine example of Moorish manhood. Kane noted the bullet hole, the powder marks about it, thinking of other things. Then he gently lifted the revolver from the dead hand, careful to hold it by the rubber butt. It was immaculately clean, save where the whorls of the skin of Abd-el-Malek's dead fingers had touched it. Oily . . .

"He must have cleaned the gun just before he used it," he said to Gratz, who was moving about the room. "But even then, it seems odd that it's so clean. If—"

"Yeh," interrupted the new consular agent, "there's a box of cartridges here, with a cleaning rag on top of them." He came now to stand above the kneeling Kane. "No disorder in the room," he said. "Clear case of suicide." He bent over, lowered a pudgy forefinger to within an inch of the hole in the dead man's jacket. "Look how the hole is burned by the powder. This fellow shot himself." He turned questioning eyes at Kane.

"Pretty hard to make anything else of it," agreed Barry Kane. "Unless the killer was mighty close."

He went to the table upon which lay the box of cartridges and the oily cloth which obviously had been used to clean the gun. The cartridges stood brightly upright, all in order, save where one corner of the box was empty. Kane counted them, absent mindedly. Forty-five. A box held fifty. He opened the gun and saw five shells. Then he reversed it and moved the cylinder.

"That's odd!" he exclaimed. "There are two empty shells in the chamber. Wonder what—maybe he tried out the gun once before—before the second shot."

"Yeh," agreed Gratz. "Usually they do that. Maybe we'll find the other bullet hole if we look around." He moved slowly about, peering.

"Probably," offered Kane, "he fired out of that open window there."

He laid down the gun and returned to kneel by the dead man. He unbuttoned the jacket at the throat.

"Every Moor always carries a few of his most important possessions—title deeds to land, jewels, small articles like that—in a tin case hung about his neck," he said, as his fingers searched.

"Yes," grunted Gratz, "I know. Is there one there?"

"Yes," replied Kane, and drew forth a silken cord, at the end of which was a box, not tin, but silver, six or seven inches long, two inches wide, and half an inch thick. He opened the lid at the

upper end. "Papers," he said, closing it with a click. Undoubtedly the most important options on the land Abd-el-Malek had been intending to buy. But there must be more, a lot more of them, somewhere, for the land was in many parcels.

"I suppose," said Gratz, "that I'll have to take possession of all his stuff. Make an inventory. File a copy at Tangier."

He held out a fat hand for the silver box. Kane let him have it.

"Yes, you'll take charge of everything. Inventory it. His will is recorded in the consulate general at Tangier. Use the consular seals on the doors when you get through—and there's a safe behind that green velvet curtain on the wall by the window."

He strode to the spot and threw back the hanging, while Gratz watched with oblique gaze.

"Be mighty easy for a murderer to hide behind such a curtain," Kane commented Then, "It's open!" he exclaimed. "I wonder—" Swiftly he sought that which he knew should be in the safe—a dispatch box filled with documents relative to the huge purchases of land. "Yes, it's here. At first I thought, when I saw the safe open—but it's all right. Take them, Gratz. I'll explain what they are a bit later. And we'll list this other stuff."

When that job was finished, and there was nothing left for them to do, there in the room of death, Kane stood for a moment by the body of the Moor. He studied it, sadly, then inhaled deeply, turned, and went with Gratz to question the servants.

Most of the servants, it proved, had been away for a religious festival; the two who had remained on duty had heard no sound during the night, or early in the morning. But they had slept in a distant wing of the house; the walls were thick. The body of the master had been discovered when one of them had gone to him with his morning coffee. Yes; he had had visitors the preceding evening: two men wrapped in *sulhams* who were not known to the servants. The master himself had shown them to the gate, where their horses waited.

Consular Agent Gratz grew a little irritable as Kane questioned the servants.

"I suppose an investigation is necessary," he said, at last. "But nobody can find out just why a man kills himself. *Gott in Himmel!* I have known scores do so. They take their secrets with them. And I never saw a clearer case of suicide; did you?"

"No," assented Barry Kane. "No; I don't think I ever did . . . Well, I'm through. Let's go. Hope you don't object to my taking some liberties in your bailiwick."

"Oh, that's all right; that's all right," responded Gratz. "Only, what's the use? He's dead. He killed himself. Why ask questions? Myself, I've got a lot of work to do on this inventory. And you, you want to get off for Tangier, no?"

"It's getting late to be starting today," replied Kane. "But maybe. Otherwise, early tomorrow morning."

They rode away from the house of death. Barry Kane let Gratz, with his big package of papers from the safe, return alone to the agency office. He himself went to his quarters in the Hotel Español. Something was bothering him. Something which he couldn't put his finger on. He felt the need of solitude in which to analyze it. Abd-el-Malek was dead, by his own hand. That was obvious; but there was something wrong somewhere. Something very wrong.

Half an hour later, in his quiet room, it came to him.

"By Allah!" he cried out, jumping from his chair. "Why didn't I think of it before? Now let's think this thing out from a new angle."

He reseated himself, fell into a reverie that lasted the better part of an hour. Then he rode back to the house of Abd-el-Malek.

It was mid-afternoon when he again entered the consular agency.

Herman Gratz was sitting at the office desk, going through the papers of the

late Abd-el-Malek. He looked up as Kane entered, and grunted.

"Did you know, mister," he asked, "that this fellow was up to his neck in some pretty big business?"

Kane nodded.

"I was going to tell you about it—later," he said. "Too much to do this morning."

Swiftly he gave the new agent the gist of Abd-el-Malek's enterprise. Gratz listened in silence, smoking his pipe, nodding now and then. When Kane got through he nodded again, tapping the ashes out of his pipe on a thick shoe sole.

"Well, of course," he said, "that wasn't a complete secret. I heard rumors about it. And so the State Department at Washington's going to back him up? *Was* going to back him up."

"Was is right," assented Kane. "His options are worthless, now. He has no family, so far as I know. And the options didn't have much longer to run."

"Well, anyhow," said Gratz, "America's got no interests in Morocco. Better Americans don't get mixed up in it."

"But don't forget, Gratz," warned Kane, "that you are now American consular agent."

Gratz grinned.

"I won't," he promised. "When are you leaving for Tangier?"

"I don't know," replied Kane.

"You don't know? Why, I thought—"

"I'm not leaving," said Kane, "for perhaps several days. I'll tell you why, Gratz. I'm not satisfied about Abd-el-Malek."

"Not satisfied? Why, *Gott in Himmel!* What is it now?"

"I'll tell you." There was a snap in Kane's voice. "I'm not satisfied that Abd-el-Malek killed himself. In fact, I'm satisfied he didn't."

The eyes of Herman Gratz grew wide, sharp.

"You—you think somebody—"

"Yes," interrupted Kane. "I think somebody killed him."

"But why, man? Why? He held the gun. There were no fingerprints on it but his. No? He held it against his breast; I saw the powder marks on the jacket."

"So did I," said Kane, and suddenly a picture arose in his mind.

"Well, then?" persisted Gratz. "*Ach*, I think you waste much time. Why don't you think he killed himself?"

"Because," replied Kane slowly, "*Moors do not kill themselves.* Didn't you know that?"

"Moors don't?" There was genuine surprise in Gratz' face now. "What you mean?"

"I mean that Moors do not commit suicide. I should have remembered it this morning; but I didn't. It's true enough, though. I've heard old-timers here say it's true. I've never heard of a Moor committing suicide. It's against the Koran; it means complete damnation. And it's not the—the custom. If a man wants to die, he goes and fights enemies till he is killed; then he gets into Paradise. No, it's just not done. I should have remembered. Didn't you ever hear that?"

"*Gott in Himmel*, no!" rasped Gratz. "Is it—is it the truth, you say?"

"It's so much the truth," replied Kane, "that I'm staying over—to try to find out who killed Abd-el-Malek."

THE quick fall of African night found Barry Kane making his way afoot through a narrow, high walled street, toward a certain native coffee house which, he had learned, was a favorite gathering place after dark for the chief muleteers and camel drivers—heads of caravans whose routes ranged from Tangier to Timbuktu.

In his head buzzed a few pregnant facts; and from them appeared dim ghosts of their possible offspring. That Abd-el-Malek was no suicide, but victim of cold blooded murder, he no longer had a doubt. What had at first seemed to him to be only a conclusion based upon a generality—that is, upon the fact that Moors are to a man fanatically against self-destruction—had now become a posi-

tive conviction. And it was a conviction supported by several facts, which facts pointed to a number of unavoidable conclusions. He summed them up thus:

Moors do not commit suicide. Abd-el-Malek had no known reason to wish to die and some very important reasons to desire to live. True, he had been found dead, grasping a clean revolver. But that revolver was too clean; its very cleanness was a suspicious fact. True, also, that the Moor apparently had cleaned the gun just before he used it—or appeared to have used it. But Barry Kane knew that it was highly improbable that a man could clean a nickel plated revolver with an oily cloth, carry it about, even for a minute or two, and leave only a few clean finger prints and no smears. No; it looked very much as though that gun had been put into Abd-el-Malek's hand after he had been shot.

Was the gun actually the Moor's? That, Barry Kane couldn't tell. It might have been: it might not have been.

But still further: the picture rose before him again of the bullet hole in the purple velvet jacket of the Moor. When he had first looked at it, it had appeared to be merely a bullet hole, singed with brown powder marks. Hours later that hole had appeared to him again—and then, in his mind's eye, he had perceived what he had failed to perceive before; the bullet hole was not in the center of the circle of powder burn, but at one edge. How could that have happened? Had Abd-el-Malek held the revolver muzzle against his own breast it seemed certain that the bullet hole would have been in the precise center of the burned spot. And there were two empty shells in the gun, but only one wound in the body.

But although the conviction was increasing that Abd-el-Malek's hand had not pulled the trigger of the gun which had killed him, Barry Kane could perceive no good reason for that killing. Nothing had been disturbed so far as he had seen. Important documents, even a few jewels, had been left in the box hung around the Moor's neck. The safe door had been open—Barry guessed that Abd-el-Malek had been at the safe when he turned to meet his murderer—but nothing was missing, so far as he could judge, whereas things worth a fortune had been left. Packets of title deeds to, and options on, properties worth millions; title deeds which, under the peculiar native laws, gave incontestable title to their possessor, regardless of any explanation or record as to how they were come by. Robbery assuredly had not been the motive for the crime. And as for any other motive—

The end of his reflections came as suddenly as a lightning flash.

From the mouth of a dark street he was passing, two men—natives, to judge from their *djellaba* and hoods—sprang upon him, bearing him to the ground.

Barry Kane was no weakling. He was in good condition, and he knew how to use his fists. But he was no match for his antagonists, who were heavily built fellows, able to hold him helpless. He struggled to see their faces, but it was dark as Erebus in that narrow, deserted street; all he could do was feel their grip upon him, sense their strength, and catch the breath of one man who had been eating garlic. After a bit he bethought himself of the automatic pistol in his shoulder holster, made a last valiant effort to free an arm. And then something crashed upon his head and he passed into the cool darkness of another sort than that of the night.

When he awakened he found himself in a small room, lying upon a bed. There was no artificial light, but the moon had risen, and its light illuminated the white plastered walls of the room. It made silver squares out of two small windows, and up and down those squares ran narrow black stripes. Bars; iron bars, Barry perceived. He was a prisoner, somewhere.

He sat up, grunted as the bump on his head made itself remembered. He was a prisoner. He had been set upon by two men in the darkness, had been knocked out by a blow on the head,

probably with a pistol. And now he was locked up in a room with iron bars at the window. Why?

He recalled, bit by bit, the struggle. He had been summing up the case of Abd-el-Malek. He had been seized. One man's breath had smelled of garlic. They were heavily built fellows. Natives. Or at least they wore native cloaks. He had tried to get his gun; had jerked one arm free. Then a hand had seized his own hand and something had hit him . . .

Barry Kane straightened with a jump, rose. Something had clicked. Just as the sum appears when one has turned the crank of an adding machine—after poking a lot of little buttons, which might be held to represent thoughts—so the sum of this problem of Abd-el-Malek's death and the attack upon himself had appeared to him in white letters on a black background. One word. A name. And now he burned with the thrill of his discovery.

There was no longer any doubt. Facts took feet and arranged themselves like soldiers in proper order, marching. The killing of the Moor—and the reason. How it had been done. Why the bullet hole on the purple velvet jacket was not in the center of the burned spot. Why there were two empty shells in the cylinder of the revolver. Why the gun had been so recently cleaned, and why there were no smears of oil upon it. And all of these solutions of lesser problems gave him the incredible answer to a bigger problem still. They pointed directly, clearly, undeniably, to the man who had killed Abd-el-Malek, and had tried to make the death look like suicide. And they explained why the Moor had died.

Barry Kane cautiously tried the door to the room. It was, of course, locked. And barred on the outside, he judged. He made no noise, however. He must get out; he must get out in order to do what was necessary now, in the light of his new knowledge. This was dangerous business. From the moment of Abd-el-Malek's death he himself had walked in the shadows, without being aware of it. If he raised a disturbance now, he might yet follow the Moor. The criminal had not seen fit to kill him—and he could guess why. But if the criminal were interfered with, Barry Kane knew that he would not hesitate to add a second murder to his first.

He was playing—the man who had killed Abd-el-Malek—for big stakes. A part of them he had won. The rest he would win—unless Barry Kane got out of his prison, took his life in his hands, and put an end to his nefarious operations. And that he had little time to do so, he knew. Yes; he could even guess why he himself had been made prisoner instead of a corpse. By morning the assassin would be away; would have completed his work; would be riding the trail to safety.

That should not happen, the American vowed. He would get out of this prison of his. He had to. That was a problem. But he had to—he had to . . .

BARRY KANE examined the windows. The iron bars were strong. Far below him lay an apparently unused cobbled patio surrounded by a wall. Between the houses beyond the patio he could see a dimly lighted street with people passing, but too far away to hear any call he might make. Besides, a call would bring misfortune.

He tried the bars, one by one. Solid. Firm in cement settings. And even if he could get through the window, there was a sheer drop which no man could take and live. Yes, he was in a pretty safe place. Assuredly there was no tool about the room which would enable him to break, cut or remove the iron bars—even one of them. And if he could do so, he'd need a rope to lower himself.

It looked pretty hopless, but against that hopelessness was a good, red blooded determination to get out, not to let the killer of Abd-el-Malek, the man who had imprisoned an American official, get away with it.

He began a careful examination of the

room. There was a little chest of drawers, empty. No use to him. Besides this there was a wooden bed of some cheap European make. A blanket on it. Well, the blanket could be torn into strips, twisted; it might make a rope of sufficient strength to hold him. But even then, the iron bars remained.

His foot caught on something. He stumbled and caught himself. He reached down for the obstruction. It was a rope; the rope, he judged, with which he had been tied. Well, this was a bit of luck—although not very much after all. The blanket would have served; the iron bars were the real obstacle. If necessary, he could have ripped up his clothing and made a rope. But his captors apparently had been well aware of the strength of the iron bars.

Could he pry them loose with a stick broken from the bed, he wondered. A bed slat maybe?

He reached under the mattress and pulled out a slat from the rickety bed. He went to a window, but it was no use. Nothing to get sufficient leverage on. The bars were six inches apart. The slat bent. The bars sprung a little, that was all.

Barry Kane sat down upon the bed and considered the windows. He had a rope and a bed slat. With them he had to get out—but how? There were two windows, one on each of the walls forming the corner, thus being at right angles to each other.

"By gollies!" exclaimed the vice-consul general. "By gollies, I wonder!"

Quickly he found the rope. One end of it he tied to the center bar of the one window. The other end he passed around the middle bar of the other window. Then brought it back and around the bar of the first window. The rope was long enough to pass around them three times. When he fastened the end of the rope, he had laced the two bars together with three strands of fairly heavy rope.

"Will it hold, I wonder?" he asked himself. "How strong is a rope?"

Thereupon he went about finding out. He took the bed slat and put it between the strands of rope in the middle, then twisted it like a tourniquet. The slat was long and gave him plenty of leverage. The ropes tightened, the slat grew resistant to his arm muscles. He twisted it. The rope began to crackle a bit; the bars at each end bent inward.

"It'll do it! It'll do it!" Barry Kane rejoiced. "I'll show that son-of-a-gun something."

Again he threw over the slat and brought it around underneath.

And then the iron bar on the window at his left came out with a snap, singing for a moment as it vibrated.

Hurriedly the prisoner untied the rope, unwound it from the bars. Then he seized the bar which had come from its upper socket, put his weight upon it, bent it inward. To it he tied one end of the rope. He straddled the window ledge, tested the knot and knew it was good. He let himself go.

It was a ten-foot drop from the end of the rope to the cobbled patio. Barry let himself down, took the drop. It jarred him, and his injured head throbbed painfully for a moment. Then he was off. The five-foot wall of the patio offered no obstacle, and very shortly he found himself free in the streets of Dar-el-Baida. Only then did it occur to him to reach to his shoulder holster. He had completely forgotten that he had carried a gun. To his surprise it was still there.

"Huh!" he grunted. "They sure thought that I was out of the game."

He made sure the automatic was loaded, that the shells had not been removed. There was bad business ahead. He, Barry Kane, might have to kill a man. And, also, he might himself be killed. But that was a risk he did not hesitate to take. The killing of Abd-el-Malek, an American citizen, was not the only crime of which the assassin was guilty. Officially, Barry Kane had no need to avenge the killing himself; he could merely call upon the basha of the town for police, and have the man arrested. But he—he himself had been at-

tacked, imprisoned, his office as a representative of the American Government grossly insulted. And more than that . . . No; he, Barry Kane, would officiate at the services to follow.

Herman Gratz, the new American consular agent, was seated at this desk in the agency when Barry Kane, hatless, disheveled, angry, strode in. Upon the desk in front of the agent was the steel dispatch box of the late Abd-el-Malek, and the papers it had contained. He was engaged in tearing up some of them, laying aside others.

Abruptly he ceased this occupation—which seemed pleasant, judging from the faint smile upon his face.

"Put 'em up, and put 'em up high, Gratz!"

Gratz jumped. He stared at Barry Kane, who held a leveled pistol. He gulped, hesitated. The big hands, shaking now, went slowly upward.

"This—this—" stammered the consular agent. "This is a craziness. What's the matter with you? What—what do you mean by pointing a gun at me?"

"It means," replied Barry Kane coldly, "that I am the American vice-consul general, and that I want you for the murder of Abd-el-Malek."

"What! Me? For the murder— You're crazy. I'm the American consular agent, and you'll be sorry, my dear young sir—"

"YOU'RE no more the American consular agent than I'm Mulai Hafid," interrupted Kane. "Keep 'em up. Keep 'em up and turn round. I'll shoot if you make the least break. You've just played hell so far, haven't you? But now it's my turn. Turn around." He jabbed the fat man with his pistol. Gratz slowly turned. "Now lower your hands, bring 'em around behind you. Yes, I'm going to tie you up—even though I have to touch your hands to do so. Now hold steady."

Upon the desk lay a roll of the strong red tape which the Government supplies and which has been the source of so much jesting at the methods of the powers at Washington. The vice-consul picked it up, thinking that at last it was to justify its existence. Awkwardly he began to bind it about the thick wrists.

It was difficult, because he dared not lay aside the gun. Gratz took advantage of the fact. He risked the danger of a bullet in the spine, by whirling, reaching for his hip pocket. But Kane brought the muzzle of his own automatic down upon the fleshy arm, paralyzing it for a moment. His hot eyes blazed into those of Gratz.

"Gratz," he said, slowly, "I'd rather welcome a chance to kill you. If you get funny again—"

He paused as there was a knock at the door.

"Who is there?" he called.

"It is I, Farij, servant to Sidi Abd-el-Malek," replied a voice.

"Good; enter," commanded Kane. And when the brown fellow stared with wide eyes at the picture confronting him, Kane said, "Glad you came, Farij. Here's the man who killed your master. Tie him up with this tape, while I make him behave himself."

The Moor jumped forward, seized the tape and, muttering in Arabic, fastened the German's wrists securely and with no regard to his complaints.

"You'll pay for this, Kane," growled the German. "You can't do this to me. I'm an official of the American Government, and I didn't kill Abd-el-Malek. You're crazy."

Kane sat on a corner of the desk, swinging the pistol, staring with cold eyes at the German.

"Gratz," he said at length, "you are not, and never have been, the American consular agent at Dar-el-Baida."

"But—but I gave you my credentials —my appointment from the consul general at Tangier."

"Forged, Gratz," said Barry Kane. "I haven't looked at it again, but I know it's forged. I'll look. I know what I'll find." He took the paper from his pocket where he had placed it. "Quite as I

thought," he announced, after an inspection. It's quite plain where the signature was traced first with something which left an indentation of the paper. Then you went over it with ink. Where you got the stationery and the seal I don't know. But the chances are you made some excuse for fooling around the consulate general, and got hold of what you wanted."

"Bah!" exclaimed Gratz. "You make up silliness."

"Don't think it, *hombre;* don't you think it. I've talked with the muleteer in charge of the caravan which brought you down. You didn't arrive yesterday; you've been here over a week. Lying doggo. And I was in Tangier a week ago, and no Herman Gratz had then been appointed consular agent . . .

"No; I'll tell you all about your little game. You're not only out for personal loot, but you're some sort of political agent into the bargain. You heard, somehow, about the land Abd-el-Malek was intending to purchase. You wanted to put him out of the way because you had a chance to get hold of some highly valuable title deeds, and to keep an American from obtaining important interests in Morocco. But it was sort of ticklish business, because you were planning the murder of an American citizen. You had to cover up. You had to get possession of documents after the murder. And then you had to have time for your getaway. So—" He paused to light a cigaret, to stare for a moment at the face of Farij, who was watching Gratz with a look which meant killing.

"So," he continued, "you were in Tangier. You got hold of the necessary stationery, faked an appointment as American consular agent at Dar-el-Baida, forged the consul general's name to it, and came here. I'm morally certain you killed Nahon, the former agent, by poison —but the way things are done in this country there's no way to prove it. You might have bluffed him out of office, at that. Of course you didn't expect to find me here. Nevertheless, you went ahead, killed Abd-el-Malek and then presented your fake credentials—which you'd intended using with the local officials—and I fell for them. There have been queer birds serving as consular agents before this."

"Lies," growled Gratz. "Made up lies!"

"It was pretty clever, at that," Kane went on. "You knew that as consular agent you'd have charge of the investigation into Abd-el-Malek's death; would have charge of all his possessions afterward. After I'd gone back to Tangier, you could take your time; get what you want, and ride off safely. Only one thing wrong with it, Gratz. Your hands."

"What you mean, my hands?" snarled Gratz "You're crazy."

"No, I don't think so, *hombre* . . . Well, you managed to get into Abd-el-Malek's house early this morning. Probably you got in during the night, hid yourself, and waited. I think you hid behind the curtain in his library, where the safe is. He came in, went to the safe, opened it. You stepped out; he turned. You shot him through the heart."

"Bah! It was plain suicide," growled Gratz.

"You sure made it look that way." admitted Kane. "But Moors don't commit suicide. That was the thing that stuck in my craw. They don't, you know. But you didn't know that, did you, Gratz? An important bit of native psychology that you didn't know. And then, when I'd once thought of that fact, things began to look funny, here and there. That bullet hole and the burned spot around it, for instance, Gratz."

"He held the gun against his jacket," said Gratz. "The burn showed that."

Kane laughed.

"Not at all, Gratz. The burn was supposed to show that. As a matter of fact, the hole was not in the center of the burned circle. That puzzled me. As did also the two empty shells in the revolver. But now I know what happened. You

shot Abd-el-Malek as he turned from the safe. Then, following out your intention to make it appear to be a suicide, you went up to the body, and fired a second shot—but with a shell from which you had removed the bullet—at the spot where the fatal bullet had entered."

"*Gott in Himmel!*" cried Gratz. "But I tell you—"

"That's what happened," continued Kane. "And then you had only to get out of the house—which offered no difficulty, as the walls of the patio are low—and come to the agency, present your credentials, take charge of the inquiry into Abd-el-Malek's death, return a written verdict of suicide, take charge of all his papers which you wanted, loot his property—and beat it."

Breaking off, Barry Kane looked at Farij.

"Do you understand English?"

"*Aiwa, sidi;* yes. I understand what you are saying," the native replied.

"Well, don't let yourself get violent," Kane warned, for there had been a strange look upon the face of Abd-el-Malek's servant.

"Let's finish the story," said Kane. "We—you and I—went to the house, saw the layout. There was the revolver, which you had so thoroughly cleaned and put into the dead man's hand—didn't it occur to you that even if he had cleaned it, he'd have smudged it up considerably, covered as it was with fresh oil? Anyhow, it all looked like suicide. Especially as nothing had been disturbed. The safe open, the papers in the silver case around the dead man's neck. You knew you'd take charge of all that later, of course; without any question of your actions in doing so.

"Well, everything went according to your plan. I'd fallen for the fake appointment. I fell for the fake suicide—until I remember that Moors don't kill themselves. When I didn't start for Tangier this morning you began to get nervous. When I said that I'd reached the conclusion that Abd-el-Malek was murdered, was going to stay over and investigate, that was bad. But even then I didn't have a suspicion that these were doings. That didn't come to me until I was set upon by a couple of thugs, knocked out, and imprisoned in a room somewhere until you should finish your business and make your getaway. I suppose—" he turned again to Farij. "Do you know whether he has horses ready?" he asked.

"He has," was the reply. "May the curse of Allah rest upon him forever, but he employed me—me, servant to Abd-el Malek—to arrange horses for his use on business of importance."

Kane looked at Gratz, and the little eyes of the German were red and awful.

"Why," asked Kane, "didn't you kill me, instead of locking me up?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," began Gratz. And then he broke. "I wish to God I had," he snarled.

Farij made a swift motion toward his knife, but Kane interrupted the movement.

"You have heard, Farij?" he asked, and the Moor nodded. "Remember his words, for they undoubtedly shall hang him . . . Well, Gratz, that's about all. I escaped. I knew then who was the killer of of Abd-el-Malek. All was plain. I knew that whoever wanted to get me out of the way must be the murderer of the Moor. I knew that one of my attackers was—Herman Gratz. Do you want to know how I knew, Gratz? It might interest you. I couldn't see your face in the dark, of course. And you didn't speak. Nevertheless, I knew it was the alleged American consular agent. Do you wish to know how, Gratz?"

"Well, say what you've got to say," growled Gratz. "I can't stop you."

"It was this way, Gratz. When I first shook hands with you, this morning, here at the agency, my hand was repelled from yours. The touch of yours was repugnant to mine. Some people, you know, can't bear to touch a snake, or a frog, or a fish. Lots of people are that way with human beings. I am. The touch of the hands of maybe one or two men—and women—

out of a hundred, makes me just a little ill. That's what yours did, Gratz. But that wasn't all. Each different touch of that sort is distinctive; just as distinctive as the face or voice of the person. I could identify such a person in the dark—as I identified you. I hadn't thought of you as a possibility, Gratz. But when your hand touched mine, in the struggle, you might as well have shouted your name in my ear. And after that, the thing was simple. All—"

Gratz rose and lunged so suddenly that he caught Kane off guard. He crashed against the vice-consul general, and the two of them broke down the desk on which Kane was sitting. The pistol fell from Kane's hand. For a moment he was stunned by the impact of the German's great body. Gratz rolled over, stumbled to his feet, looked toward the door, started to run.

But he took only half a dozen steps—and those led him into sudden eternity. For the knife of Farij, Abd-el-Malek's servant, flashed in the air, and buried itself between the great shoulders of his master's murderer.

Kane struggled upright.

"You shouldn't have done that, Farij," he cried, watching the last twitchings of what had been Herman Gratz. "He would have been properly punished."

"*Sidi*," said Farij, wiping the blade of his *kumiah* upon the back of Gratz' coat, "the justice of the Christian is too slow for me. For the sake of Sidi Abd-el-Malek, my master, whom I loved I had to. Do with me as you will."

Barry Kane was silent a moment; then shook his head slowly.

"After all," he said, "the man was guilty. He attacked me, tried to escape. He was killed while doing so. I take back my words, Farij. You did well. And may mercy be shown by some one to his black soul."

KOTZEBUE

IT MAY BE the rule, as some say, that a true son of Erin will as soon team up with the devil as with an Englishman, but if you get old Captain Holt to tell you his yarn about Kotzebue you will hear of an exception. For the captain will tell you how his old friend, Red Gorman, whose first and very Christian name is Patrick, and Major John Harvey, whose sun creased eye sported a monocle, made up a quartet which for harmony will never be equaled on this side of the Circle. And he may also give you the impression that it was a quintet, because he thinks of Zebulon, a great mastiff he picked up in the Justice shipyard in San Francisco, as a ranking member of the party.

Indeed, when the captain reaches his dotage—which he may in the next hundred years—he will probably imagine that Zeb is still alive. As for the remaining member—fourth or fifth, as you please—that was Joe Dennison, who had been Captain Holt's companion, cook and sometimes entire crew through fourteen years, and will be his friend for life. When the captain found him on an island in the South Seas, Den was a beachcomber shaken with rum. For no logical reason Holt took him on board his schooner and, although he never inquired into his personal history, judged him to be a man of some education and a gentleman who had somehow lost his bearings.

It was a bright May morning when Captain Holt, by accident, ran into Pat Gorman in a comfortable eating place near the waterfront of San Francisco. The two had not seen each other for years.

"Well, I'll be damned!" said Pat, jump-

A Novelette of Placer Mining North of the Circle

By CAPTAIN
H. H. ELKINTON

ing to his feet as soon as he recognized the man who had been quizzing him while he asked if there was any room for him at their table. "You old pirate!" He nodded his head and a bright grin spread over his face as he turned to his companion. "Jack," he said, "if you fell into the dirtiest ditch you'd come out in a general's uniform. Captain Peter Holt is just the very man we've been praying for. Now, the saints be praised." Then, after introducing his friend, he motioned the captain to a chair.

Holt, at the time, was struck with the fact that Gorman was as Irish as ever. Real Irish without a trace of the Spanish taint left in the south of Ireland in the days of that famous old harridan, Elizabeth the Queen. From his bristling red hair and clean shaven mug to the soles of his wandering feet, Pat was all Irish.

"When I last saw Captain Holt," he said, "I was a geologist finding oil for the big concern. And he—you were running to the islands, Peter Holt."

"I was," replied the captain. "I kept that up until the Japs got entire control of both produce and transport. And what mischief are you up to now, Red?"

"Ah!" Pat laughed. "You'd be surprised. Wouldn't he, Jack?"

"Rather more than surprised, I fancy, since you've told him he's the man we've been looking for," replied Major Harvey.

"And ain't that the truth!" said Pat. "But what say, Peter Holt? It's a man like yourself—with a schooner and all . . ."

But Major Harvey, seeing Holt shake his head, reminded Gorman that the captain might very justly expect fuller in-

formation regarding both himself, the major, and the project.

Holt demurred. He said, of course, he was curious to learn what Red was driving at, but the thing that was worrying him was whether he had a schooner or not. Gorman's face fell.

"And what way is it you wouldn't be having a boat, mister?" he asked. "It's the red gold we're after."

"Now, let's keep this straight, gentlemen," interrupted Major Harvey. "With your permission, Captain, I will undertake to explain in a few words the adventure Pat and I have hatched in our idle minds.

"About three months ago we both found ourselves rather on the wrong side of the fence in a hottish revolution in Guatemala. I was serving the *de jure* government in a military kind of way, but I can't tell you what excuse Pat had for being there at all. He *had* been tapping rocks and fighting bugs and natives and all that back in the country, but he had been paid off his whole year's contract, and even urged to leave."

"Yes, fancy," mimicked Pat. "He wanted me to miss the doings."

"Of course we couldn't be expected to tell," went on the major, "that a ranting Celt would take sides against any revolutionists. I expect he did it just to be with the minority. At any rate it soon became evident that our government was no longer *de facto*, and it behooved those of us who could retreat to get away in the navy—as Pat calls the gunboat—to Belize in British Honduras. And now here we are, out of a job, as you say in the States.

"So we rather thought we'd like to have a go at the North—pretty far north—Kotzebue, to be exact. For the sport of the thing, you see? But we toss in the bare possibility of picking up a little gold, just to sweeten the pot, as it were. Will you join us, Captain? We'd like to have you."

Holt didn't shine up to the major at first. He had never had any predilections for the English anyway and he thought Harvey was a little "high hat". So he took his own time explaining his present situation while he made up his mind whether or no he could get on with the stranger.

"While I was running to the islands," he began, "I fell in with a young lawyer named Willet. He was out there seeking health and asked me to bring him home in the schooner; said he was fed up with the floating hotels with their so-called amusements and crowds of blatting tourists. That being a line I could sympathize with, we got off to a good start; and then during a long run to the Gate we had time to become great friends. Now that friend has become Judge Willet and it is on him it depends whether I own a schooner or not."

"How come?" asked Gorman. "Have you been rum running?"

Captain Holt smiled.

"Well, about six months ago," he continued, "I hauled out the old basket and put her into the Justice shipyard for an overhaul. I had known the Justice people for a good many years and had had a lot of work done in their yard. I knew the old gentleman had died about eighteen months ago—of blood pressure and specialists and other high priced ailments—but I hadn't heard about George, the oldest son, being killed in an auto accident. That left only Erwin, a drinker, gambler and all round sport with no interest in the yard except for what spending money it brought him.

"Well, it seems that Erwin collected what cash he could lay his hands on and disappeared with a wench from up Sacramento way. And just about the time my repairs were completed, down comes the sheriff. And the schooner being still up on the rail, why, some ass of a deputy tags her and there I was."

"In what one might call a hell of a mess," said the major quietly.

His habitual expression was one of such utter boredom that Captain Holt was surprised to find that he had been listening.

"Judge Willet," continued the cap-

tain, "was fortunately appointed receiver. He made me watchman of the yard pending the sheriff's sale, which brings in twenty-five good dollars a week, a godsend to Den and me. He also hopes he has got the old tub pried loose from the sheriff before the sale comes off, which is tomorrow. I hope to heaven he has, I can tell you. I don't say I wouldn't take command of something better if I had it, but every rotten plank in her is mine, and Denny the crew is loyal, and they're all I've got. If we have to part I vote to have her sink under me on the way to somewheres rather than just be collected by some ass of a deputy sheriff.

"My hair and beard are already well sprinkled with gray and I've taken my share of chances with blue water and good fortune just around the next corner, but I ain't through yet, by a long shot. And, gentlemen, if Judge Willet gives me the decision I'll talk Kotzebue with you. I'm on my way to see him now."

"Righto," said the major.

"Three hearty British cheers," said Gorman, mimicking his English friend.

Captain Holt, suggesting that they come across the Bay that evening to the shipyard where his schooner lay and have dinner on board, went about his business.

AT SIX that evening—the hour the captain had named—Gorman and Harvey were at the gate. They were taken across the yard to a landing stage where the schooner's yawl was moored and Pat, as if it were a matter of course, sat down to the white ash and soon pulled them aboard. The captain received them with the explanation that in view of their evening's talk he had shifted his berth up the river a mile or so to discourage visitors.

"That looks as if luck were with us," observed Major Harvey.

"So it is," replied Holt, "so it is."

"What did I tell you?" said Gorman. "Oh, Jack, Jack, you ruddy Britisher." They were introduced to Den and Zebulon.

The mastiff, Captain Holt said, had attached himself to the crew in utter disregard of the long arm of the law. Harvey commented that the dog looked like a law unto himself.

"Yes, pretty good luck, I should say," Holt resumed. "Not only is the brave old vessel pried loose from the bankrupt's assets, but Judge Willet gave me permission to rummage the whole yard for anything I wanted, to be paid for at the average rate brought at the sale tomorrow. And we haven't been idle. The lumber you see here secured on deck was intended for a blacksmith's shop, cut out but not put up. I felt like taking that with a small forge, certain tools, some barrels of cement, fireclay and brick, and about three tons of soft coal. I have the sheriff's voucher for everything on board. Except—Den, are those cocktails ready?"

The captain laughed and lowered his voice.

"When I was going round with the inventory I found a *very* nice stock of liquors in Erwin Justice's office, all prewar stuff, very cunningly hidden and not on the list at all. So everything else we get by due process of law, but Zebulon—well, I think we'll have to say we get him by self-determination of the governed—and let's say Erwin's booze is by Major Harvey's luck."

The cocktails had enough backbone in them to make a lively party. And after a good dinner and everything cleared away—or, as the captain put it, all square with the lifts and braces—they all, including Dennison, got their pipes going for the pow-wow.

"Now what is this talk of gold?" began Captain Holt.

"If I may be allowed to speak," said Gorman with a look at the major, who never saw it, "I have had some Klondike experience and have heard a lot about Nome and the wonderful placer finds there. Now if the terrain in Kotzebue is like that of Nome, gold is certainly in the streams from the high country back.

Or if there is a fringe of tundra on the sea side, those beach sands must be very rich."

"It's enough to sweeten the pot," observed the major, repeating his breakfast phrase. "I don't think we ought to get excited about Pat's gold. I think we ought to be fully prepared to find it a dud. But we might stumble into something, what? And now about financing the trip."

He went on to explain that he and Gorman each had a thousand dollars to put in and would agree to call the schooner with its lading and the voyage under its skipper Captain Holt's share. Then he suggested that he and Pat go forward and give Captain Holt and his crew a chance to smoke and talk it over a bit.

This pleased Holt. Against his prejudice he was gradually being won over to the British soldier. He watched Gorman and the major clamber forward, but he went on smoking in silence determined to give Den the chance to speak first. For himself, having been put at loose ends by the tie-up in the shipyard, he was already inclined to take on the adventure. After awhile he looked at Den and said—

"Well, what are you thinking about it?"

"Why, I'm thinking Kotzebue way," replied Den. "It seems an opening. You and I have been into every cranny of this boat and we know that she would never carry us to the South Seas. We also know that the insurance inspector laughed at the idea of renewing. He said, if you remember, that pitch, coal tar and oakum would never take the place of sound timber, at least not with his company. If we take in the Kotzebue gamble, we can hug the coast most of the way, according to the weather, of course, but a gale in mid-Pacific would be almost sure to sink us."

"Just the line I was running on," commented the captain. "But what do you make of that soldier fellow? Gorman, of course, I know."

Den nodded his head.

"He can't help being that way," he said. "He's English. I've met the like of him before somewhere. He's probably stubborn but good stuff."

"Come aft, men," called the captain. "I've had a pow-wow on this Kotzebue business with the crew, and it's a go, practically unanimous. Eh, Zeb?"

He had been gently pulling at the mastiff's ears and now he gave him a pat. The dog blinked one eye in approval.

Pat and Major Harvey each dug into his money belt and put a thousand dollars on the table. Den dived below and came back presently with—"Excuse the cook for butting in, but I have five hundred to invest in the Kotzebue Mining Company." He threw down his money.

"We're off," said Pat with a grin. "Capital of the company, twenty-five hundred dollars, paid up. Real actual money. Security, the sterling honesty of the board of directors."

The buying of the supplies was to be left entirely to Den. He knew provisions and prices and where to buy. Nobody could put anything over on him. The major, understanding perfectly well that he was the only one Captain Holt had the slightest doubt about, asked if he wished any kind of written agreement. The captain's reply was to put the whisky on the cabin roof again and propose a bumper to Major Harvey's luck.

Pat and the major—whether it was the latter's luck, or the cabin roof—never got ashore that night. At daylight the captain got a tug and by noon the schooner was comfortably docked. Den went into the buying of the stores, sending to Seattle for the potatoes and onions. He and the captain, having seen scurvy in all its horrors, were most particular about these. Then Holt checked up on the sale and settled for the items he had acquired.

In the course of time everything was carefully stowed in accordance with the captain's particular—almost fussy—ideas. By the time he got back from saying a farewell to Judge Willet the water was on board and the tug all ready to tow them

out to sea. It was the first day of June. A long roll was on but an easy southerly wind took them out of sight of land long before night. The captain put her on a true northwest course and held the wheel until midnight, when Dennison took her.

THE RUN to Unimak Pass was slow and uneventful. Two weeks passed before they were in Bering Sea, and there they ran into bad weather. No real number niner of a gale but just one little blow after another with a pitching and wrenching bubble of sea. Captain Holt could ease his schooner along to perfection, but as the insurance inspector had said, no pitch, coal tar or oakum could take the place of sound timber, and the old basket began to leak.

In his grubbing for loot, as he called it, around the shipyard, Holt had found an old Blake pump which he had bought for less than its price as junk. He had repaired it thoroughly and fitted it with his usual care. And with two pumps he felt sure of being able to keep the ship afloat, provided only the pumpers didn't give out. So it was now, under these first real adverse conditions, that he began to keep a quietly observing eye on the English soldier.

He had indulged in some misgivings as to how a man, used to command and having everything done for him, might show up in a pinch. He had seen often enough such a one prove useless as far as real labor was concerned. But Major Harvey showed himself true blue. Thin and wiry, he had the heart and sinews of a lion, and evinced no disposition to shirk his spell at the grind. Red Gorman, of course, was right there. He really enjoyed giving that big body of his a workout. As strong and nearly as big as an elephant, he was able to slam the pump handle up and down for hours.

There was precious little cooking that could be done. Once in awhile Den managed a pot of coffee, but for the most part they had to keep going on hard bread, sardines and tongue, with an occasional tin cup full of good stiff grog. Zeb was having the worst time of it. Not naturally a cabin passenger anyway, he didn't much enjoy being slammed about in such confined quarters.

The captain was at the wheel most of the time. No one else could come anywhere near him at easing the old sieve along. Pat had some idea of handling a boat and Den was a very good helmsman indeed, but when either of them relieved the captain for a spell the leak steadily increased. At last, however, thanks to the big Blake and the men who worked it, they got around Cape Prince of Wales, past Cape Espenberg and were well into Kotzebue.

"Now," said the captain, "if the bottom don't fall out of the old hooker we can get across and beach her in Hotham Inlet."

A strong breeze holding from the westward took them across in a short time. No soundings were taken, as the captain said he could steer her by the look of the water. He ran across to within a few fathoms of the east shore where the high land rising in successive ridges in the background was fringed on the sea side by tundra. The anchors were brought aft and the chains stowed in the yawl, which was swinging from the stern davits. Warned that the sticks would never hold, all hands got as far away from forward as they could. She had been put square before the wind with jib dowsed, and fore and mainsail wing and wing, and by the time she began to scrape had gathered an incredible momentum.

There was something fateful about the speed with which she took the beach, driving fully half her length above high water mark. Holt's face was grim with resignation. All hands clung to whatever they could lay their hands on to keep their feet. She shuddered with the strain when she came to a stop. There was an awful sound of riving and splitting timber as the main-mast ripped out of its rotten step in the keelson and began to fall. It crashed down with its tangle of lines carrying the foretopmast with it.

The old schooner was a wreck for sure,

but not one that was likely to sink, for her nose was nearly up to the bank of tundra and her bowsprit overhung it. And all was still but for the sounds of the waves on the shore.

In a moment or two the fervent self-congratulations, the thanks to God and patron saint broke out, but everybody was too worn out to keep at that very long. The captain dived down into the cabin and soon came up with a bottle of the Justice whisky of which all except Den partook freely. This incredibly total abstainer had looked out for the emergency and had some food at hand. So the stove was fetched up on deck and the galley hooked up around it.

A hearty meal of ham and eggs, hard bread and great draughts of strong coffee changed the look of things; and, after a pipe of black navy, all hands jumped into cutting the sails from the spars and putting them up on the bank. But this done, they knocked off and, leaving Zeb in charge of the deck, went below too tired even to cover the great rent in the forward bulkhead and the roof of the cabin which the foot of the mast had made when it went over.

A big task lay before the party. Luckily it was not impossible to establish a camp where they were, but first it would be absolutely necessary to get everything across the half marshy tundra up to the higher ground. This was almost bare rock over which was scattered a great number of boulders which, released by the frost, had rolled down from above. But in about a week the work of moving was done. The cases of canned stuff formed into walls and covered across with an old sail gave temporary shelter. And this was good to see, for it was now August and the days were rapidly shortening.

CAPTAIN HOLT bossed the building operations. While Pat and the major got the frame of the house ready, he and Denny put up a very neat stone wall for the north end. There was plenty of native stone, with brick out of the hold for a chimney. The captain was very sparing with his cement, eking out the mortar with moss and earth. This wall—which worked out about eighteen inches thick on the average—was twelve feet wide, seven feet high at the eaves and three feet more at the peak; quite an undertaking considering the circumstances.

A great deal of attention was given to the roof. After getting it boarded, sheets of copper were bent over the north end and secured to the wall. Then tar paper was well battened down and, last of all, the mainsail stretched over the whole thing. As they didn't know what to expect in the way of gales during the Fall and Winter and as their jacktrade carpentering left a little something to be desired, they took some of the wire standing rigging and passed it over the roof in three places, fastening the ends to turnbuckles anchored into the rock.

Along the east side were ranged a double tier of bunks three feet deep. And when they got up a ceiling of deck planking covered with canvas, and all the crannies well caulked with moss, they began to be pretty comfortably housed.

A sort of entrance porch big enough for use as the kitchen was put up on the west side facing the sea. Here across the north end Denny had his establishment, the big stove in the center, work table and shelves to the left and a huge woodbin to the right. The door was in the center with a small, heavily shuttered window on each side. Beyond the door again was the gun rack, and a pretty well furnished rack it got to be when all the arms were brought out and put on it.

There was the captain's armament consisting of his old love, a heavy double Remington .10, a light Winchester rifle and a big Colt pistol. Gorman had two of the side arms, a heavy Colt and a German automatic, besides his light Winchester. The major put up his particular pet, a big English express rifle, a twelve gage Parker shotgun and an automatic pistol, a reminder of some miserable months in the trenches.

Denny's contribution to the company's means of defense or rapine was a small automatic and a very doubtful looking muzzle loading shotgun which, perhaps from some association, seemed to have great value in his eyes. It really was a very strong shooter. A ration of ammunition was on a shelf above the rack but the reserve was kept on top of the bunks.

Along the south end of the porch was a row of coat hooks with a trough below for footgear. This additional room proved very useful, as any one coming in from outside could take off his wet, snowy outer clothing before going into the living room. The south end of the living room itself was used for stores that would be injured by freezing. There were some eight barrels of potatoes and three of onions, about which Den and the captain were as anxious as if they had been the gold itself. Gorman had ragged them some about their inspecting each potato one by one and wrapping it carefully in a paper napkin before repacking. But he had piped down when the captain asked him if he had ever seen any cases of scurvy or dyspepsia in the Klondyke.

At breakfast one morning as soon as the greater part of the house was in working order, the captain—his log book open before him—announced that it was Sunday and high time for them all to knock off work and play a little.

"Now, Major, how about it?" he said. "If you and Red take your rifles and examine those valleys above us, Den and I with our shotguns will go up to the point and stop some of those ducks and geese that are going south in such big flocks. There's a long night pretty close on us and a little something like that would fit right good into our bill of fare. What do you say, gentlemen?"

His proposal met with hearty approval. The major got down his express and began cleaning the grease from it. With this piece, according to Gorman, he could stop anything from a sparrow to a Guatemalan *insurrecto* at five hundred yards. Pat knew he was no great shakes himself with the rifle, although he could justly claim to be a crack pistol shot. The captain carried his old Remington .10 and Denny clung to that curiosity of his, the number ten muzzle loader. A light snow had fallen and the duck overall suits blended very well with the landscape. *Kopaks* over heavy felts were put on for the first time.

The results of the Sunday's hunt were very gratifying. A few reindeer in the upper valley pawing up the moss and feeding on it taxed the skill of the riflemen, but they killed three of these besides a small black bear. They came home toward nightfall to find the others already in and fairly loaded with ducks and geese. The wind had been strong from the sea, setting any birds that were brought down up on the beach before they fell. It was dark night before supper was ready.

The importance of having plenty of fresh meat presented itself very forcibly and it was agreed that presently what had been begun as a pastime would have to be included in the regular program of work. But there was still plenty to do in the camp itself before the long night came down. Right in connection with fresh meat, for instance, there had to be a game rack to keep anything savory away from the foxes, which were plentiful and very bold and nearly worried Zeb into hysteria.

A GREAT many things had still to be done on the house. A hood for the chimney and some roof ventilators were made out of the ship's copper. The ventilators kept the place freshened up without chilling it off too much. The inside of the boarding between the studding had to be well lined with tar paper and another wall of old canvas put on inside of that. The brand new jib, the captain reserved for a four-man tent in case of a forced retreat overland.

The captain, having an old fashioned liking for a mantelpiece, had provided for one when the north wall was built. This had to be fixed up to hold the clock

and several dozens of odds and ends that gravitated there. Below the mantel, for the stove had been set well out from the wall, hung some tools and implements and one thing and another. In front of the stove under a large swinging lamp was the cabin table.

Then the major had to indulge a fancy of his. He worked out a device or insignia consisting of the initial letters of their four names wheeling about a great K for Kotzebue. This with the date he studded with iron nails into the front door and was rather surprised to find the captain's fancy tickled by it also.

It was also deemed advisable, before the light failed entirely, to put up a workshop and an arrangement to signal for rescue if necessary. For the latter they used the main topmast, which was sound. This was fitted with a block and signal halyards and set up, wedged in a great pile of rocks on the second ridge above the house, where a lot of light firing was also piled and covered.

An outside workshop, it was thought, would be a great convenience, so it was planned to build one out of driftwood from the beach front. The Yukon, the greatest forest destroyer on earth, is continually undermining its banks and bringing down every year thousands of trees, mostly pines. The great river never takes a holiday and, strange as it may seem, a good deal of the vast amount of drift it carries down finds its way across Norton Sound, around the peninsula, through Bering Straits and into Kotzebue Sound. So, working both ways from the wreck, every trunk or branch that had any good left in it was sawed into lengths for fuel and thrown up on the bank. And every straight tree trunk was saved for the workshop.

The tundra was freezing and their pane of glass—as Pat called the daylight—was getting very small. The captain, expecting more snow any day, had managed somehow in the meantime to work out a big rough sled from some of the schooner's upper timber. This proved very useful when the snow came and before long an immense pile of firewood was accumulated besides enough logs for the workshop. It is amazing, the amount of work that three men can accomplish.

Denny, of course, had no time for gathering fuel or building. Another day's shooting added enough to his regular work as grub artist to pretty well fill his program. The wind having got into the east, a great many of the birds that were shot could not be retrieved. But the wind was a help to those with the rifles who came in after dark with one deer and reported five more down in the valley. The foxes, attracted by the entrails of birds that Denny threw out, left the deer alone and they were brought safely in at daylight.

Then Denny, what with butchering and cooking, had his hands full. And not only that, but as it appeared now he was something of a taxidermist also. He declared that having enough money for once had turned his head, and when he was buying supplies he had blown in a small amount on chemicals for preserving skins. And he reserved for himself a smooth space of wall in the workshop where he could stretch and cure them. Hearts and livers he hoarded for Zebulon, entrails he kept for fox bait.

The workshop was got up and roofed with the heavy boards that had formed the ceiling—the lining—of the ship's hold. This was covered with canvas and painted. A stovepipe with a wind hood was set with proper precautions as to fire, and the small cabin stove, a chunky cast iron thing with a round body and a flat top, connected. All the coal and most of the stores were brought in and piled in the north end, and the remaining space was floored with what was left of the deck, cabin roof and hatches of the schooner. A great deal of time would be spent there sawing wood and that sort of thing, and the captain believed the floor was worth the trouble if it only saved one spell of rheumatism, doubtless an incurable disease, as he said.

With the cabin stove going full blast this was always a comfortable enough

place to work in. The grindstone and saw-horse were installed and a work-bench put up, and wire hooks fitted to hold the lanterns. Wall space had been reserved for Denny's furs, of which he was collecting quite a few, mostly gray fox. These pests were constantly snooping around the game rack and giving Zeb hysterics. They lived up among the rocks where they had to scratch through the crust in winter to catch a lemming, or wait for the occasional opportunity to run down an Arctic hare.

This last is a fine little animal. Strangely enough it can penetrate a frozen surface of snow on which the reindeer makes no impression whatever. Holt and the major shot quite a number of them in the valley where they had evidently come to feed on the ground willows and moss along the base of the ridges. The white overall suits give the hunter quite an advantage in the snow besides being good wind breakers.

VERY likely you will not get Captain Holt to admit it now, but it must be confessed that about this time when the dense fogs were coming in from the sea with every westerly wind the men began to fret each other a little. Gorman had already gibed sufficiently at the unloading of ten barrels of paraffin oil—truly a plentiful supply—but when five of these were found to contain books, he put it on a bit thick and Denny took offense at his reflections on the captain.

Harvey was quite delighted at seeing the library, the collection of years and generally a very well chosen lot, and he very calmly asked Gorman why the hell he didn't learn to read to keep his tongue still. But Pat only retorted hotly with something sarcastic about the English sense of humor.

Every one by now should have been used to his red headed Celtic temper, and the same might be said about Holt's fussiness regarding health and safety. But a few days after the book episode there were some hot words over the tar pot.

The captain had reserved enough fire brick and clay to set up the big tar pot—after it was well burned out—alongside of the stove in the workshop. When Red asked him what it was for, he said it was about time that all hands except the major—who had been using his collapsible tub right along—got themselves thoroughly boiled down. Pat unreasonably took this as a personal slight and said something that gave the captain the idea that Harvey was dissatisfied or impatient because no overland journey was being provided for, nor even some kind of craft being built that would carry them as far as Nome, at least.

The next night at supper, however, the captain pulled things together amazingly with a bit of magic.

He had found in the shipyard a couple of melting ladles of heavy cast iron that had been used for lead of babbitt metal. To one of these he fitted a hickory handle about five feet long and took it with him up the stream bed, where scattered boulders had dug pot holes throughout its length. The captain dredged some of these holes with his scoop, and down toward the sea he found in one of them two little nuggets of gold. They could not have been worth more than two dollars and a half apiece, but when he threw them on the table at supper that night they produced two hundred and fifty dollars worth of excitement. So much for the power of gold over the human mind!

It occurred to everybody at once, of course; if the captain in and hour-or-so's perfunctory search had found these two magical little crumbs, what might be got from the stream bed lower down, the sand of the beach and the underwater bar that for centuries, maybe, had been forming just over the break of the rocky terrain in the waters of the inlet? There was great excitement. The major held the two little nuggets in his sinewy palm and looked at them.

"Just to sweeten the pot," he said, but nobody heard him then. They were talking of how next Summer they would have the world by the tail.

Nobody spoke now of the signal mast. No visitors were wanted for another year. And thanks to Denny's foresight, they were well provided. Even in that important item, tobacco, so easily overlooked, they felt safe. And now by this time they felt that about everything they could do as far as house and buildings were concerned was done.

Their water supply at first had been the very small stream that came from above in a deep bed which showed what a raging torrent it would be in the Spring thaw. This was augmented by two or three of the emptied barrels set under the eaves and which were of great use during the Fall rains. When things froze up tight the heavy snows provided for them.

As long as there was any daylight or twilight at all they hauled in the firewood from the coast and by the end of November had an immense pile stacked alongside of the workshop. But now the easterly and northerly gales brought snows and cold, and the long night was down.

To the left of the door to the kitchen, or porch, was a box for the hand lanterns with a five gallon can of oil below, and the thermometer above. Farther along was the ship's small fireproof safe containing money and anything of personal value. The combination was known to all hands. The captain kept his navigating instruments and roll of charts on a shelf in his bunk. The swinging lamp hung over the cabin table in front of the stove. Den had a reflector lamp enclosed in tin on the wall over his table, and next to it a metal match and candle box. The large thermometer and barometer combined hung by the armory on the other side of the door. The workshop was lighted by lanterns.

One evening in the early part of December, after the supper dishes had been cleared away, Den brought a notebook and a bundle of papers to the cabin table. The tobacco smoke was in horizontal strata from the table up to where the heat of the lamp caught it and sent it in curling eddies up to the ceiling. Den looked at everybody through the smoke a little foolishly and said:

"When the Kotzebue Mining Company was organized, fifteen hundred dollars was put into my hands for purchase of supplies. I spent the whole amount and one hundred and sixty additional, which was advanced by Captain Holt. I have never rendered an account. I would feel obliged if you would look over these receipted bills. I bought a good many things besides eatables, as I can show you."

Captain Holt, who had looked up from his log, turned back to it as if Den had not meant to address him at all. The major gave a loud "Ha Ha!" and went on with his reading. Pat said:

"Damn you, your bills and accounts! Stick them in the fire."

Den gathered up his papers and said—"Much obliged, gentlemen," in a trembling kind of voice as if he were offended.

And just at that moment Zeb, who was stretched out behind the stove, began to growl.

All hands paid attention, for this was not the prelude to Zeb's vulpine hysteria. In another second he was on his feet, the hair on his neck bristling. He raised his black muzzle and kept on with his deep growling, while the men sprang to their feet.

The major got to the peep hole first and immediately reached his left hand to the gun rack for his express.

"Open the door," he said to Pat. "It's only a bear." Pat obeyed.

It was an easy shot in the bright moonlight and old Bruin collapsed just as he turned from the game rack to see what the commotion was about.

The thermometer on the porch read fifteen below and the captain knew that in the Arctic, putrefaction can set in very soon if the body of a slain animal freezes while the viscera is still hot. It makes the skinning easier, too, if the body is not allowed to freeze. So, while Zeb did a little investigating to see that all was now right with the world, the great carcass was dragged right into the house. All

hands pitched in to help with the butchering.

After the work was done and the men cleaned up and got ready for bed, the talk naturally ran on bears. The major thought that they hibernated, but the captain found in some volumes of Arctic exploration which he fetched from the shelves, records of meetings with bears during the long nights. Harvey found the idea of another visit quite exciting. Nothing so far had given him quite the thrill of adventure that this casual and intimate approach of a truly wild and formidable animal had caused.

AS THE COLD increased, the temperature at the floor of the cabin was often below freezing and Denny pulled the long, light, wood case from under the bunks and distributed the heavy felt boots for evening wear. These boots were the kind sold with the northern hunters' and lumbermen's *kopak* shoes and added immensely to everybody's comfort.

A few days before Christmas, Den began his preparations for the festival; and at breakfast on the morning of that day invited his three companions to put on their working clothes and adjourn to the workshop to fill up the time by sawing wood until he called them. He promised dinner at two o'clock sharp and said that the captain might come across a little early, to prepare the cocktails himself.

It was a fine spread for a gang of castaways. Den had roasted two splendid geese with bread and potato filling seasoned just right. There was a great bowl of mashed potatoes, a big dish of stewed onions, canned peas and lima beans and fresh bread baked the day before. With a lavish hand befitting the occasion he also hacked off a generous iceberg of the fine tub butter he had laid in and which as a general thing he supplied very sparingly. And there was a whole bowl of gravy. Den had devoted an entire duck to it and it was immense. By three of the plates stood a bottle of unfrozen beer, real lager, a part of Erwin Justice's looted stock. The feast was topped off with a fine steamed pudding, a cupful of brandy flaming over it, splendid coffee with some body to it and a swallow of brandy. At the captain's suggestion all hands jumped in to help Den clear away and clean up before death from overeating or lethargy overhauled them. It was agreed over the pipes that evening that, thanks to Denny, it had been a great success.

The winter passed quickly as everybody kept at work, and work in which one takes an interest is the best preventive or cure for a good many imaginary and nervous diseases.

The captain built an eight-foot sled and made a tent on the plan adopted by Dr. Kane for his exploring trips during the second Grinnell expedition in search of Franklin. It was made with the roof, sides and floor all of one piece. Four poles were led through grommet holes, two at each end. The poles crossed above the roof and came out at the eaves two feet above the ground to be secured by a tent rope over them, stretched in the usual way by toggles to form or support the ridge. The ends were stitched in last. It was easily handled and a very efficient shelter from Arctic winds.

In the early days of February the blessed old sun began to announce himself by a glow back of the eastern highlands, but did not actually shine on the camp for a full week. It was frightfully cold but the men were out nearly every hour of the short daylight.

Gorman and the captain studying the ground at the head of the stream worked out a plan to deflect it into a new channel before the big thaw set in. For the present the schooner's rudder was sledded up and left to be used in backing up the proposed dam at the mouth of the present creek cutting.

At the evening talks many plans were suggested for the dredge they would need to get down to the great bed of wash below low water mark where they expected to find the most gold. The captain's plan was at length adopted and, getting the forge to work, he turned out a dredge that

worked after a fashion. It later on was altered several times until at last it was efficient, and before the end of the Summer had brought up a good many tons of sand and gravel. But for the present with the ground solidly frozen and the shore piled with ice—in some places to a height of ten feet or more—nothing could be done.

Washington's birthday was in the offing and the crowd voted for another celebration. Den, always good natured and willing, was the most enthusiastic and promised a topping of mince pie.

But things had been going along too well to last. Every fair day the major made a trip to the valleys with his gun and generally brought home an Arctic hare or some ptarmigan. The twenty-first of February being clear he went out, taking the Remington and some buckshot cartridges.

Although it was too early to expect reindeer, the major, as usual, from sheer inborn habit, approached cautiously to survey the valley both ways before entering it. He saw something moving; it was coming down the wind toward him.

"By Jove!" he concluded. "It must be a wolf."

They had seen no wolves so far, and he wished he had brought his express. But he put in two buckshot charges and when the animal was within forty yards gave him a load in the head. It thrashed around a bit but soon passed from works to rewards. What was the slayer's astonishment to find that his wolf was a sledge dog with his harness and a bit of trace still on him.

This meant talking out in committee of the whole. Tying the trace around the dog's neck the major dragged him down the slope to the camp and summoned all hands. The dog was in pretty good condition, showing that he had not been very long away from his team. There was only one conclusion to be reached: there must be a sledge party somewhere to the north hunting for game or mining camps.

After this more or less unsatisfactory conclusion had been tacitly accepted for the want of anything better, Den spoke up for the first time. And as what he had to say seemed to have nothing to do with himself he didn't blurt it out with that sort of boyish self-consciousness which sometimes irritated Gorman. On the contrary, this time there was something spellbinding about his manner of speech.

"WHILE the Bering whaling lasted," he began, "every once in a while a whale ship would get caught in the ice. And when this happened it was the rule to work in back of some of the islands that stud the coast south of Point Barrow and winter in safety. Then the natives would come and camp on shore within reach of the ship or ships and rent their wives and women folk to the dirty dogs of whalemen. And the result has been a lot of the most villainous halfbreeds on earth.

"Now some six years ago the whale ship *Joseph Whelan*, one of the last of the New England whalers to go to the Bering, wintered on that coast. The first mate went ashore for some purpose and took with him a harpooner named Godfrey. Neither one ever returned to the ship but the mate's body was found later some miles back in the country. His head had been crushed in and his body stripped and partly concealed in a snowdrift. Godfrey had murdered him and made off with gun, ammunition and clothes, and the natives had concealed him and taken him in.

"He has been heard from, though. And according to vague reports he has made himself through his great size and ferocity a kind of chief among the Chuchees. And he has led a gang of native and halfbreed cutthroats who murder and rob exploring parties and any miners and prospectors they come across down this way. Now I think it behooves us to keep a sharp lookout. We may have a visit from a gang that will wind up the affairs of the Kotzebue Mining Company."

"Well," said the captain, thumping Zeb in the ribs, "we've got a pretty good signal alarm right here in the company. But I can tell you something else that I

have no doubt fits in with Den's story.

"About ten years ago I became very friendly with an old prospector named Abel Marvin. He had made some good finds and was well off. He concluded that he was through with wandering, bought a house in San Francisco, installed a housekeeper with a helper and became pretty soon the most restless and miserable being inside the Gate. Whenever I was in port he would spend most of his time on board the schooner because he said we smelled of the big spaces.

"Four years ago—I had been running from Seattle to the Mexican coast, but the destruction of the shore plantations in one of their damned revolutions broke that up—I saw Marvin again. He was giving it up. He had come across another prospector he had known for years, a chap named McCullough, and they made up their minds to have a try up here in this country. A schooner was chartered, loaded as if to supply an army, and taken up just below the Mulgrave Hills, not far north of where we are.

"The bargain with the owners of the schooner was that a vessel should be sent up last Summer to bring the M and M crowd back to civilization if they were ready to return. The ship was sent all right but all they found were the remains of a burned house and the body of the cook, a man named Brodie. Marvin and McCullough had probably been burned with the house. No traces of either one could be found. Now I have no doubt that this outrage should be attributed to Godfrey, because what natives are left along the coast, while they are terrible thieves, are not murderers."

Festivities were forgotten. Everybody was on the *qui vive*. Zeb, having sniffed the dead dog, was very much exercised. He was restless all that day and night thinking it over. After dark, Holt and the major got into their wraps and, well armed, went up the hill for a look-see. And they got an eyeful. On the beach about five miles to the north they could see very plainly the glow of a big fire.

The captain always took the first fire watch from ten till midnight and then called the major. This night he couldn't keep his mind on what he was reading and was not at all surprised when his successor on watch turned out long before his time. Pat and Denny, as their snores proclaimed, were not fidgeting.

Zeb, though uneasy, showed no great excitement. At breakfast Major Harvey advised that no scouting be done outside. Keep the smoke coming out of the chimney and everything going on as usual. About ten o'clock, seeing Zebulon's excitement increase, he proposed to go up to the game rack with a cleaver as if he were after supplies.

But Den said the major would give himself away if he tried to cut the meat, so he put on his extra clothes and, taking cleaver and saw went, without a glance up the hill, to the game rack, where he proceeded to cut off a piece of meat, keeping his face to the ridge. He showed no signs of hurry and even stopped, making a pretense of adjusting a shutter.

But when he came in with the report that he had caught a glimpse of men's heads and a sound of a dog's bark, he owned up that he could feel shots going through him every second.

Harvey at the peep hole in the outside door soon put up his hand. A team of nine dogs drawing a sledge with two men was whirling down. Both of these fellows carried rifles. The major gave his directions in a low voice. The second the sledge stopped, one of the men threw off the trace toggle and secured the dogs to one of the uprights of the game rack. Both visitors started toward the house. When they had taken but one step the door was suddenly flung open and they found themselves confronted with four very serious looking rifles held right on them. And in their first gasp of surprise they heard the stern command—

"Put down those guns."

The little company of adventurers stood, grim and unwavering, their ready guns conveying an unmistakable message to the interlopers. For a moment there was the silence of death heavy upon them all.

THE BIGGER of the two evidently understood, for he then laid down his gun on the pile of furs that was lashed to the sledge. The other fellow was slow. But not Red Gorman, who was on him in less time than it takes to tell it, and in a few moments had wrenched his rifle away from him and slammed him face down on to the hard snow. In the struggle the gun was discharged and almost immediately there came a ragged volley from above. The big villain reaching for the gun he had laid down went over backward, shot through the head.

Now Pat and the captain hunted cover, for six men were bearing down on them, four of which kept up a spasmodic rifle fire as they dodged among the rocks. But where were Denny and the major? Almost as if in answer to his thought came the heavy *ping! ping!* of the express followed by the roar of Den's cannon. The rifles among the rocks stopped firing.

One man was writhing around on the frozen snow, screaming and cursing with a full load of buckshot in him. Another, dodging behind a big boulder, exposed himself to the captain, who promptly killed him. Holt could tell from this that the major had taken Denny around the house and a little way up the hill to outflank the enemy. The two rascals with spears, who had formed the right wing of the attack, stood for a moment undecided as to what had happened, and then started on a run up the slope.

But they had delayed too long. With the report of the express one of them fell headlong, whereupon the other dropped unhurt and lay as flat as he well could. Which was not a bad idea, for the major would have stopped him in another second.

Den and the major came to base, reporting three of the enemy down and two of the three shot through the head. Now the lieutenant, the renegade's sled companion that Pat had manhandled, was jerked to his feet and searched. A money belt, a heavy revolver and a big knife were found on him. The big fellow's body was stripped of a fine parka and new native boots. He also yielded a well filled belt, a gold chronometer with A. M. engraved on it, an Army Colt, a knife and some keys.

Gorman hauled in the other unkilled villain, dragging him along as if he were a dead dog, and threw him to the ground. This chap was in a great funk, trembling and crying, while the other tried to keep up a defiant attitude.

Under strong guard the two were hustled up the hill. There they found two sledges, one with seven dogs and the other with eight. On the latter was lashed the carcass of the largest bear our people had yet seen. It was unskinned and had not been cut into except to disembowel it. The viscera had probably furnished breakfast for both men and dogs. The captives were ordered to load up the dead bodies and weapons and take them down in front of the house. Nothing much was found on them but the prisoners were made to strip them of good parkas and boots. After which, working at the muzzle of Pat's very convincing Colt, they loaded the bodies on to the sled again and ran them out on the ice and threw them into a tide crack.

"And be careless about slipping," said Pat.

The coolness with which our people proceeded began to take some of the defiance out of the lieutenant and when, the funerals over, Pat and the captain shot the fifteen dogs and made the prisoners skin and clean them and hang up the carcasses, he collapsed. Almost meekly he shed his very good parka and accepted the wormeaten one that had belonged to the dead spearman.

A serious looking but really mock debate now took place on the advisability of letting the prisoners live. Several times Gorman stepped out with his pistol as if to put them out, when he would seem to be persuaded to let them go. Finally they were given a knife apiece, a box of matches and two of the dog carcasses. Then conducted to the edge of the tundra, they were kicked on to it and allowed to start on their way north. When they were

about a thousand yards distant the defiant fellow threw his dog to the snow and turned to shake his fists at the camp. An express ball whistling close by his head gave him another thought. He grabbed up his canine and both ran for the shelter of the rocks.

"Ugh!" said Den. "That's that. And devilish unpleasant, too. You three had better go in and get a stiff drink of whisky. I'm going to swill some strong black coffee. Then I intend starting our holiday dinner while you clear up the battle field."

As soon as the rum got in its work the cleaning up began. The guns and ammunition were put into the workshop and all the furs and garments now stiff with frost were left spread on the ground. The captain quoted Nansen's old rhyme relating to lice:

"You may put me in a pot and boil me all right,
But don't leave me out on a cold winter's night."

And he went on to say:

"I think it would be well to hang up all the bags and haversacks, even the money belts, and leave them overnight, for it's going to be a corker. The mercury is down to minus thirty now on the porch."

Den stuck out his head to yell:

"Wash up! Dinner on the table in ten minutes. Here's buckets of hot water."

In spite of another drink all around it was a quiet company that drew up to the table and a quiet company it remained all the way through the meal. Then the captain spoke.

"This has been unpleasant, men. But for the major's luck with that loose sled dog, and Zeb's fine scent and wonderful sagacity, some of us might be dead or badly wounded by now. But here we are, all alive and sound, but I'm feeling the reaction.

"However, we have to decide what to do about those nine live dogs. If toward the end of summer we decide to retreat I will, if possible, lengthen the yawl and raise her a foot. I believe our only way of retreat is by water. Of course it has been running through each one of our heads that we could use that dog team for an overland trip, but—and it's a big 'but'—we would have to feed the ravenous brutes for at least six months first. If we keep them penned up they will sicken. If we turn them loose they will hang around and destroy everything not hung out of their reach, hunt away the reindeer and bear, and clean up foxes, hares and rabbits for miles around. And if they don't hang around they may find their way back to their former owners and enter the service against us on a future attack. Think it over while we smoke."

Den was the first to speak.

"Yes," he said, "and they would be sure to mob old Zeb and put him out. Besides, they are wearing mighty fine hides. I say, shoot 'em."

Pat who had been very glum remarked—

"Den, you are a damned cold hearted villain."

The others laughed and the major finished the confab with:

"There is nothing else to do, really. It won't pay—that is, it won't pay us to let them live."

Pat jumped up and started for his outdoor clothes.

"Lord!" he yelled. "If it has to be done, let's get it over with right now."

The three followed him out with their pistols and in a few minutes the sickening job was done. The bodies were placed in a heap and covered with the fur sleeping bags and the yawl turned over them. Cold as it was, the bodies so placed would retain enough heat overnight to keep them from freezing.

While they were washing up again in the porch, Pat said—

"I regard the likes of us all as a gang of damn murderers."

Indoors for the night, the captain made a big bowl of punch, devoting a pint of gin and a lemon to its composition. Leisurely imbibing this nightcap along with the soothing navy plug the crowd soon recovered their normal composure. At ten all except the fire guard turned in. No one feared another attack that night.

THE NEXT day all went to work except Zebulon. He was indignant at having been kept out of all the fun the day before. A fine breakfast consoled him for awhile but about eleven o'clock the camp had another visitor that required attention.

A roaring coal fire had been made in that little red fury, the workshop stove. A discouraging amount of dead dog had been dragged in, and while the major and Denny were skinning and cleaning it, Pat and the captain overhauled and oiled the captured firearms. These jobs were about finished—most of the skins were hung up waiting to be cured—when Den suddenly stopped and raised his head.

"What's that Zeb's raising Cain about?"

The next instant came the sound of something being upset outside. Pat, cautiously opening the door, disclosed a bear busily engaged with the fox bait barrel into which the entrails of the dogs had been thrown. The major glanced down the barrel of the express, and another bear went over the divide.

"How lonely it is up here!" remarked Harvey quietly as he reloaded the gun. "So far from civilization! No incident, just dull routine."

When all traces of butchering were removed and the carcasses hung up outside, Zeb was brought out, warmly praised and rewarded with the bear's heart and liver. The blood stained tarpaulin was dragged out, another piece of old sail spread on the floor and the bags and knapsacks brought in and emptied. There were six of them. Those belonging to the four gunmen and spearmen held nothing but ammunition, a spare shirt and some tobacco. But the bags that hung at the upstanders of the leader's sled yielded more interesting items.

In one, which still retained a faint stenciling, A. M, were found two travelers' check books, one made out to Marvin and the other to his partner, McCullough, a pair of gold framed eyeglasses and a fine field glass with some matches and rifle ammunition. The second bag contained shells, tobacco, a big silver watch engraved with G. McC, a fine field compass and an automatic pistol. The renegade's money belt contained eight hundred and fifty dollars in United States money and some silver. His partner's belt held a hundred and fifty dollars, some coin and a big seal ring with Marvin's monogram engraved on it.

Valuables and papers were soldered up in an empty tin, while all the books, clothing, furs and fur sleeping bags were hung out on a strong line stretched from the house to the workshop, to purify in the frightful temperatures yet to be expected and the drenching rains that would come from the sea in the late Spring.

The sled the leaders had used called forth the admiration of all. It bore on the crossbar of the standards a small brass plate engraved "McTavish, Montreal." It was very light for its length—eight feet—was built of the finest hickory and lashed with rawhide. Not a metal bolt or nail went into its construction and the wood of which it was made was no kiln dried stuff.

Settling back into the old routine, things went on as before the excitement. A good deal of interest was taken in making Zebulon a cannibal. Only one item of the supplies had turned out badly, namely, a barrel of corn meal which had gone wormy. Den had been making mush out of it for Zeb. He liked it and it was good for him, and his friend, the cook, always slipped into it a good chunk of meat or some fine bones. Den now commenced to use dog flesh, going cautiously at first, but Zeb never got on to it. The meat had been frozen and refrozen so many times, and that and the subsequent cooking evidently took away all flavor of canine. Eventually Zeb ate all of those deceased relatives and flourished exceedingly.

A nightly habit of the captain was to take Zeb and a gun and make a round of inspection. One evening toward the end of February he came in with the report that it was snowing. Wind from the northwest, thermometer three above and barometer very low. For three days it

snowed, while a high wind piled up drifts of great depth.

A favorable draft kept the passage between the house and the workshop pretty clear. This put an end to all thought of commencing mining operations for awhile. The captain worked on screen door and window frames, Den was busy with skins. Pat, fuming with impatience, sawed wood like a demon, while the major, self-contained as ever, sat at the chopping block and piled up fire supplies for Den.

This was the last heavy shot in Winter's locker. And as soon as the snow let up and the game rack had been dug out, the talk turned to the proposed dam at the head of the creek. Once the Spring thaw set in, an immense amount of water would come down from above, which might, in conjunction with the expected downpours of rain from seaward and the high tides, fairly flood them out.

The major had noticed in the ridge rock about fifty yards to the north of the present outlet a depression which appeared to be filled with small stones and earth. And, having Gorman's opinion that a few days' work ought to bring them down to bedrock, suggested that they do some blasting and picking to lead the water in another direction. After which, it would very soon cut for itself a channel through the tundra.

Gorman, taking account of stock, reported two one and a half inch star drills besides plain ones and crowbars. Den reported three one-pound canisters of fine gunpowder out of which only ten drachms had been used for his field piece. The captain thought he might find some fuse in his junk pile or, if not, make some quite easily.

"Then," said he, looking at Gorman with a smile, "if we are careful to put the holes in the right spots of the geology, those three pounds of powder ought to loosen up a lot of rock, and then we ought to be able to keep fairly busy, eh?"

Gorman smiled.

"Yes," he said. "We've done so much loafing!"

NORTH about a mile, although the snow was piled in immense drifts under the lee of the rocks, the surface of the tundra on the beach side was comparatively clear. From here, in spite of the hard work freeing the drift stuff from snow and ice, was hauled on the big wood sled a good supply of fuel. This had to be done first because it was proposed, in order to get started early on the drilling, to build a big fire on the place where the cutting would have to be done in the bedrock, and pretty soon more fuel would be needed in the camp anyway. Several days were given over to hauling driftwood.

The sun was getting in his work now, and numerous small streams were beginning to come down entirely too close to the buildings. So work was started on the new cut.

Complimented one night at supper on his wonderful performance with the pick-ax, Pat said it was an hereditary gift. His ancestor, the great King Brogan, he explained, could beat any man in Ireland swinging a pick and the art had been religiously preserved in the family ever since, as even in New York his father and uncles used to practise it in their spare time, say eight or nine hours a day.

In a week or ten days, by fire, gunpowder and strenuous pickwork, a wide and deep channel was cut. The old one was closed off by a dam made from the schooner's rudder and the trash from the new cutting packed with sod of reindeer moss, grasses and ground willow.

The upper strakes of the schooner's planking was about the only material left, and poor stuff it was for the purpose; but the captain and Den went to it and at length worked out a really efficient sluice box and a conveyor to bring a stream of water to it.

It was a great relief to everybody to be out of doors again. The captain was amused to observe that since the attack not one of the men went out unarmed. Before the battle there had been a disposition to laugh at his "fussy" advice on

this point. So now all work was done with arms close at hand.

With the help of the sun, Pat and the major worked down the old channel, prying over the boulders and large stones with crowbars, cleaning out the holes they left, and scraping the cracks in the bedrock. They found small nuggets in the holes and gold in the cracks which they piled up by the sluice box head for washing. As they came down toward the beach their finds increased. While they were waiting for the ice to go out of the sound and inlet and leave the beach sand workable, they went over the old stream bed several times.

Although the ice in the sound did not begin to break up until late in May and the inlet was fast bound for ten days longer, vast flocks of birds were heading north already. The climate and the hard work during the Winter and Spring had called for meat, and everything had been eaten from the game rack except a few birds which were not in prime condition. So the captain went after birds, and later on the major followed suit, for the great snowfall had evidently covered a wide territory and although he kept a sharp lookout for reindeer, none was seen until after the first of June.

Den had been in the habit of cooking a piece of salt meat once a week, but now that they might expect game, he and the captain thought it about time to overhaul the salted stuffs, give both beef and pork a thorough washing and salt them down again.

Den also began now to crack up all the bones he had very carefully saved, boil the marrow out of them and use the liquor to make Zeb's mush; which, with an occasional rabbit or fox, kept their guardian angel, as the captain called him, in good shape. Said Pat—

"The days are long all right, but the everlasting day of paradise wouldn't be long enough for all the work this crowd has wished on to itself."

Over the pipes one night after supper the captain took occasion to sum up the situation thus:

"Now, men, here is something we had better talk out. According to our grocery scales we have some three thousand dollars' worth of nuggets. The stuff taken from the cracks will probably when washed yield as much more. We expect great things from the beach and bar sand. But, if we retreat from here, say about the first of September, it will have to be done by boat. We have agreed, I think, as to that. Therefore, the yawl must be lengthened if possible, built up at least a foot, fitted with masts and sails, sheathed against young ice, and caulked and painted. This job naturally falls to me.

"We have on hand an ample stock of salt meats, hams and bacon to carry us through another Winter. Potatoes are getting low, onions we could make last. We have enough flour, sugar and—thanks to Den's prodigality—plenty of good black plug. Also, best of all, a good stock of coffee, enough for another year. Next, our navy beans and canned stuff will last a good while, but if we put through another of the long nights up here, we will have to cut down on coal oil. Of course very little will be used during the Summer. Now there are the facts.

"If it is voted to get away south this year, we will naturally work very hard for the gold. But a lot of my time will have to be used on fixing up the boat and if Den devotes most of his time to the gold, our living conditions will not be nearly so good and somebody may fall sick. We will have only June, July and August, for we would have to get away very early in September. On the other hand, if we decided to stay another Winter, all hands could work on the mining and the boat could be managed in bad weather under some kind of shelter. How say ye?"

"How would your own vote go, Captain Holt?" asked the major.

"Stay," was the laconic answer.

"I'm for that," said Pat emphatically.

"Same here," put in Denny.

"I think that would be the sensible decision," concluded the major. "We can just work along without getting into a stew, and not begin what would be

doubtlessly a hard boat voyage, half ready and half sick, maybe. If we find ourselves disappointed with the yield of the sand and the bar here, we can examine the beds of other streams similar to this one. The captain has made a fine tent and, as we would not have to go very far, our camp here could be visited by one of us each day. A mile or so to the south there is a larger stream than ours and, not far below that, still another. If we find the filthy stuff in any quantity, well and good. If we miss out on a big find, we already have enough to sweeten the pot; and, while some of us may get pretty rambunctious, we're as well off here as many another place we might be. And no fear of starving."

"But," put in Denny, "as soon as snow comes we will have to devote a few days to bringing in drift wood. We ought to be better stocked up on that."

"Yes," agreed the major, "we can't have too much fuel."

"Nor gold, neither," said Pat. "Well, this is where we live, then."

"The roof will have to be looked over," said Den. "I can see daylight from inside my bunk."

"Right," said the captain. "All the buildings should have a thorough inspection."

The pile of stuff on hand, picked and spooned out after washing, yielded what looked like six thousand dollars, but the beach sand promised well. A good deal of fine gold lodged behind the riffle boards in the sluice box. And next came the working of the bar.

This bar, which extended with a gradual slope some twenty-five feet below low water mark and then took a sharp drop into very deep water, had been formed by the sand and gravel which the stream had been carrying down probably for years and years. Of course it had spread out on both sides. The first idea for working the dredge was for two men to give it a swing and a pitch, and then drag it up. But this was a failure.

"All right," said the captain, "I'm not disappointed. I felt a little doubtful about it. Now let's do the thing right." He proposed to make two long, narrow floats, moor their ends to the shore and let two men walk out on them and let the dredge down properly, then all hands tally on the drag. The only thing was, would the old ship furnish the material? The major—who was as excited as any of them over the prospects, but couldn't show it—bethought him of the power that gold has over the human mind, and began to wonder which would be the first to propose drawing material from the buildings.

But without resorting to such uncomfortable means, enough stuff was gathered from the old wreck to piece out the topmast they had erected on the height and which was now brought down and sawed in two.

The contrivance was twenty-five feet long and five wide, boarded deck and bottom with the schooner's planking. Its chief defect was a habit of going pretty well to pieces if any kind of a sea was breaking on the beach, but an anchor was put out to seaward and in rough weather it was hauled off. By the end of the season it was a model for neatness, all patches and lashings.

Three men were required to work the dredge. One stood on the cross section and steered it and the others walking shoreward would drag it up the bank of silt. It generally brought up about two pecks of sand at a haul. This was dumped at the head of the sluice box. Its great weight made for hopefulness and the first wash was looked forward to anxiously.

It turned out rich, over a thousand dollars' worth of gold being spooned out from behind the riffle bars. To shorten the tale, by September first, the slope had been scraped clean and the company was richer by twenty thousand dollars. Now the long night was coming down again and it was decided to quit mining and attend to hunting and wood gathering. The raft was towed down the shore about a mile, dragged up on to the tundra bank and carefully anchored. As Pat said, for future reference.

The wealth was secured and locked up, and work of other kinds started. Holt and Gorman took a three days' trip north in the yawl and came back towing a great raft of firewood. The major with his pet, the express, got four deer and a bear before the real cold weather.

AS SOON as the game rack began to be stocked, the foxes came snooping around again. They didn't seem to be thinned out at all, and Den had all his traps out with the first light fall of snow. Pat and the captain, with the shotguns, brought in Arctic hares and rabbits, also some ptarmigan that were just putting on their white clothes. If Den cut down on the density of the mush, there was still enough of the corn meal left to keep old Zeb until Christmas, eked out by all the hearts and livers of the game.

All the furs, boots and clothing taken from the Godfrey gang were brought out again, beaten and left on a line for a week of night frosts. Not a louse survived. Den went over all his furs and hides and skins, of foxes and birds, dog, bear and deer, and gave them a day's sunning before restowing.

While daylight lasted, all hands used up every spare moment prying off what good planking remained on the wreck and taking it over to the workshop. The captain intended to put in most of the winter on the alteration to the yawl. As a good deal of stuff would have to be taken from the shop itself, the salt provision and the remainder of the canned goods were stored in what they called the Arctic end of the living house. And the shop space being taken up now by the boat, sawing and splitting of firewood was done under a tent made of all the odds and ends of canvas.

"The harder you work," said Pat, "the warmer you keep."

The snows this Winter were deep, though not piled up by a three days' gale like the one of the past Spring, and Pat and the major became quite proficient on the snowshoes. With the first coming of the sun, the Irishman's feet got very restless and he proposed a kind of spying and exploring expedition to the north. As none of them had forgotten the last Washington's birthday episode, the captain thought it not a bad idea although he was afraid of the frightful temperatures.

Den suggested that the tent should be cut in half as it could be stitched together again easily enough, and proposed that the dog skins be made into sleeping bags and his much derided fox furs into sleeping suits. The Gorman-Harvey expedition often blessed his thoughtfulness.

Captain Holt rigged up a very effective cooking lamp. He also worked extra runners, wide like skis, out of the oaken gunwales of the wreck. These were light and could be adjusted very easily and quickly to the McTavish sled for use in soft snow.

The two went off well provided. Tent, sleeping bags, extra fur cover, a five gallon can of petroleum, a waterproof bag of extra clothing, guns with a good supply of ammunition, and the provision, altogether made up quite a cargo for that eight-foot sled. But they were both in fine shape and could handle it. They were helped up the slope to the first little valley where farewells were taken. Zeb shook hands but had little to say. Captain Holt's last words naturally were ones of caution.

"It's dangerous to be safe. That villain of a second man will never either forget us nor forgive us. He took stock of our valuable plant here and if he can raise any force of natives he will be down on us again. I have no doubt that we were spied on last Summer. If he can work it, an attack will come soon while the sledging is good. Goodby, again. Be sure the neighborhood is clear of snakes, for Pat's sake, and sleep with one ear open."

The home routine went on quietly. What with working on the boat, cooking, cutting firewood, gathering fox and hare skins and occasionally shooting ducks and geese in the open places of the shore ice, the captain and Denny were kept busy and happy. Maybe it was a good relief for everybody to break up the party for a spell.

The explorers found the snow condition much better than that of the previous year and got along tolerably fast. On the third day out they killed a bear. They made camp at once and skinned and boned him. He added nearly a hundred pounds to their load but food weight, especially meat, is quickly reduced. The cold and the heavy work called for meat, meat, meat and more meat. Bear steaks, then, after their freezing fried in lots of fat with plenty of strong coffee and hardtack, kept them up to the mark. The well used pipes, and then the night's rest in their warm rigging! Hardly a kick coming.

In a week's time they had crossed an arm of the sound on the ice, and found the terrain very similar to that around the camp, except that it had much higher country in the background. As they climbed up on to the tundra they saw the blackened remains of a chimney protruding from the snow. In a place where the ground was comparatively clear they found an old rusty shovel with the letters MM burned in the handle. They were not nervous men exactly, but this find struck a chill into them.

"My God!" said Pat. "Poor old Marvin and his partner killed by those hounds, probably tortured to death to make them show up their gold cache."

"I have always felt," replied the major, "that it was a mistaken mercy to let *that* team of dogs go free, especially the lieutenant, Godfrey's sled partner, a proper murderer. We should have shot both of them while they were within range."

"What do you say, Jack," asked Gorman, "to us taking this as a hint and backtracking it?"

"Righto," said the major.

THEY made good time again across the old ice and held the pace for a long spell, not camping until eleven that night. The major was up several times for a look around during the night and they got on their way again early in the morning. Some hares were shot, but little loitering was done and their rests were short, so that in less than four days they were within striking distance of home; which was just as well for the whole company.

On the morning of the fifth day they had just got the sled loaded for the home run when they thought they heard a gunshot. As it sounded from the north it could not have been made by Denny or the captain. They were running to high point two hundred fathoms down the ridge where a good stand could be made among the rocks when the major had another thought.

It was idle to suppose that their trail had not been seen long before this if the hounds had been holding to the high country as our men had done. Why not throw them off if possible? They got down to the tundra and ran the sled along some distance and left it hidden behind some rocks. Then they climbed back to a position within fifty yards of the highest point. And it was not long before a large party came in view.

Four sledges and about thirty dogs and four, eight, ten men seemed to be following the sled tracks; and they were coming fast, too. When they reached the point where the tracks turned down to the tundra they halted. Then suddenly one of them yelled something and pointed seaward. One who seemed to be the leader ordered them ahead to the high place and then stopped them. He got out a pair of binoculars. He called a command. The dogs were unharnessed and led down to the tundra. Pat and the major looked and saw a bear scuttling away toward the ice. The dogs were soon up with the game, but he fought savagely, knocking out two of them and then got well out on to the floe.

"Jack," said Pat, suddenly turning the major's attention to the two men of the party who had stayed up with the sledges, "that's our lieutenant—that fellow with the glasses watching the hunt. Look, am I right?"

"Right you are," said the major. "So it is. Well, all the better, we'll give them a rush in a minute."

The two natives, who had laid their

guns on one of the sled loads, went out to the edge of the rocks very intent upon the bear chase. It looked as if a good piece of meat was going to get away from the hunters. The leader stood on the point, the other man a step behind him to one side. But they had been too intent.

For suddenly the second man went down cold under a crack on the ear delivered by one Patrick Gorman, and the other, turning at the sound it made, found himself looking into the muzzle of an automatic in the hands of Major Harvey. Pat, observing a sly move for the pistol that swung at his belt, caught his arm and, with a twist, broke it. The two were quickly tied up and thrown into a snow bank. So far, our men's innings.

As no shots had been fired, the gang, a mile away, were perfectly oblivious of affairs on the point, which were now certainly going strangely. For the major and Pat, working like demons, cut the lashings from the four sleds, smashed them up and, throwing the last of the coal oil over them, set them ablaze. When they took all the snowshoes that had been swinging with bags and haversacks from the upstanders and threw them on the fire, a groan came from one of the captives. Next went all the furs and clothing.

This stuff, of course, made a prodigious smoke and attracted the attention of the fellows on the ice. They didn't know what had happened, so they had to have a confab. This gained a few precious minutes for our fellows, who gathered up the bags and haversacks, the two guns and the pistol and field glasses and made a run for their own sled. The snow on the tundra was hard frozen and rougher going than that in the valley, but nothing stopped them and in two hours they were at the camp.

The captain and Den, warned by Zeb, were out to greet them. While the newcomers, who were reeking with sweat, had a good rubdown and got into dry clothes, Den brewed a great pot of strong coffee, and rapid explanations were given and plans formed to meet an attack. The disconsolate Zeb was enticed into the house, doomed again to miss whatever fun there was going to be outside.

"They'll be down on us surely," said Pat, "for a thousand devils of revenge showed themselves in that leader's eyes. Then, too, they have nothing left but their dogs, and they might as well die here taking a chance as go back and freeze to death. Not a fur bag, not a snowshoe have the scoundrels got left. All burned on the blessed bonfire. And now—" to the major—"place us."

With one critical glance over his force, the major said:

"If you please, Captain Holt, you and Dennison go pretty well up the slope and form an ambush behind the big stones. Gorman and I will go to the rocks of the second ridge and cover. We will be within sixty yards of our usual track and will open fire when they bunch for a powwow. Their leader dies first. Get in sure range and shoot quickly but steadily. Aim low. Remember, not a man nor a dog to be spared. They are a hundred times more dangerous than a pack of wolves." After that the major felt better.

ALL SHOOK hands and went to their stations. They waited a full hour in the cold before the enemy came in view. He hadn't traveled as fast as our men. But at last he came, loping along swiftly without any pretense at concealment and holding the dogs in leash, to be let loose at the command.

At the head of the slope they bunched around their leader, who was wearing his right arm in a sling. With his left hand he waved a pistol to punctuate his last orders to his men, and these were indeed his last words on earth, for with the *ping!* of that deadly express, he whirled round and fell on his face with a bullet through his heart.

The gang, surprised at this unexpected reception, deployed in a clumsy kind of way and opened fire. When Pat and the major began picking them off, they realized the seriousness of their position and sought the shelter of the boulders, but

only to be taken in the rear by Dennison and Holt. Two of them, one limping, made a run for it but neither made over twenty yards. Both were killed.

The dogs, untrained to this highly organized warfare, went wild as soon as they were let loose. Incidentally they almost set Zeb wild, too. At first the whole pack tore headlong down to the house. There they more or less broken up and some came back to mill around the bodies of their masters or be kicked at—one of them—for revealing a supposed shelter just a second before the captain's Winchester made such caution unnecessary. Two began a private war of their own by the game rack, and at least two rushed to attack the defenders of the camp.

For awhile it looked as though there would be a serious few moments with the crazed animals. But at last all were accounted for except one, which was seen going north just in time to dispatch him with a ball from that trusty express rifle.

The captain, surveying the field of victory, looked pretty green. He had seen a lot of rough action in his day, but shooting down men and good dogs was not in his line.

"They brought it on themselves. They earned it," he said over and over again. "We have cleared this coast now and let's have a big drink."

Fortunately there was still some liquor in stock. This put the proper edge back on the appetite again and Den's salt pork stew didn't go begging. Things looked better after supper. But even then it took a bit of doing to drag those dead dogs down and open them before they froze. The captain said he and Den would do it, but the other two pitched in and helped. They let the human carrion lie until morning.

Each carcass was rapidly cleaned and the slash propped open with a piece of firewood. Den had several pairs of rubber gloves which, unless it was too awfully cold, he wore over thick woollen ones while he cleaned any game. The firearms and ammunition were put into the workshop and the bags hung up outside for a good freezing. All were glad to get inside the house afterward, for the thermometer said ten minus. The captain and Den had to thaw out their hands before sitting down for the big talk. By ten o'clock the two returned travelers were nodding. After a nightcap they turned in and the captain settled down to his fire watch.

Den, his relief, had been thrashing around above the major, and got up before his time. The old man went to bed but not to sleep. The late unpleasantness coming so suddenly had upset even his iron nerves and both men were glad when the little alarm clock shrieked seven o'clock.

The canine dogs were hung up and the human dogs were slid out to the tide crack that opened at low water. The bags yielded little outside of plug tobacco, matches, one curious old memento, a flint and steel, some extra birdskin shirts and some boots—good things to handle at arm's length until after some weeks of freezing and drenching—and there was a lot of ammunition.

Eight rifles of different patterns, two old muzzle loading trade guns single barreled, and two pistols, both heavy Colts made up the tale of artillery acquired by right of conquest. A visit was made to the high place where the fire had been made, and there two long hafted spears were picked up and brought away for the sake of the shafts. The embers had been well raked over and remnants of burned fur bags and clothing lay scattered about.

The captured guns were oiled and stacked in a corner and the ammunition sorted out and stored; and then, as if by common consent, all reference to the massacre was avoided while the old routine was resumed, waiting for the Spring thaw.

THOUGHTS now began to turn toward getting back. No one would have owned up to having too much, but on the other hand no one had to make a declaration that he had had enough. Conse-

quently, while the cold lasted, all hands were ready to do anything to help along with the boat that was to take them away, and the first signs of thaw would be enough to let loose whatever horsepower Pat and the major represented toward finding more gold.

The schooner's yawl on which the captain was engaged had been built some five years previous for use in bringing off produce from farms along the Mexican coast where there was no wharfage. Up to within a few months ago it had been eighteen feet long and seven feet beam with the unusual depth of two and a half feet, and was very flat floored. If his present operation turned out successfully, she would be twenty-five feet long the next time she felt the water under her keel, and she would have been built up eighteen inches giving a little better than three and a half feet head room under the deck.

The deck was to be brought aft only over the original eighteen feet, leaving a seven foot cockpit and a narrow strip on each side with a high washboard, or waisting, around it.

The captain with his ship building was getting along as well as could be expected with the handicaps of workshop and want of lumber suitable for the purpose. Having foreseen from the time of coming ashore the probability of having to retreat to the south by boat, he had cannily laid aside certain planks while the schooner was being broken up. Every once in awhile somebody, thinking he had hold of a prize piece of lumber for some purpose or other, would be cast down by the captain's arresting:

"Just a minute, please. Let's see. No, don't take that, I need it." With these, then, he was making out. "She's going to be strong," he judged, "but not shipshape and Bristol fashion."

He now called on all hands to make one last gleaning of the wreck for stuff to make a runway over the marshy tundra for the altered yawl when they should be ready to go. It would not do to risk having her down on the beach on account of high tides and gales with driving ice. So Pat and the major, with occasional help from Den, not only stripped the bones of the schooner bare, but sawed off most of her timbers and got it all over to the mainland.

While the captain was puttering along at the boat, the others examined the frozen and snowed-up bed of the stream they proposed to work. During March and the first half of April there were heavy snows and spells of intense cold. May was on them before there was much sign of a thaw and the ice did not go out entirely until June. Every one knew they would have to knock off at the end of August to get the boat over the marsh and afloat and through a long voyage after that, still ahead.

The major brought in small game every day, but no deer were up as yet. Den kept his fox traps working and dressed all the skins he took, besides those of the thirty-odd dogs slain in the massacre. All entrails and trimmings were kept in the fox bait barrel and all bones cracked and boiled out for Zeb. Zeb used to bristle up and show disgust when he sniffed the skins of the other dogs, but all the same he was gradually eating up their quarters. The corn meal was gone now, too, and Den had to do a lot of contriving to keep Zeb from getting a suspicion of dog stew.

As soon as the weather got somewhat settled, the end of the workshop was taken out and the boat brought out into the open. She was caulked and then given a thorough coating of hot tar. After that was dry, the deck was put on—and a patchy deck it was—but it was well coated with white lead, and then covered with canvas, which was stretched over it tightly and painted. The four-man tent was a thing of history.

The foremast was made from the flying jib boom of the schooner, good spruce, stepped four feet aft of the pine stem into a firm oaken step and through a heavy thwart. The main, a much smaller spar, was set just at the old stern, which had been left in the boat. Access to the hold was through a hatch amidships. She had

a big centerboard as the captain didn't want a deep keel under her to turn her on her side if they happened to be stranded on a falling tide. The sails were made out of the eight-ounce duck bought for the overall suits. They were sharp topped with upper clubs and set out with booms, engaging a grommet in the point of the after leach. Altogether she looked seaworthy and as if she would sail well.

With June came decent weather and continuous daylight. Pat and the major —and Den whenever he could spare the time from cooking—went after the "getting rich" business. As soon as he had finished the boat and knocked together some sections of platform to roll her on across the tundra, the captain joined them.

The head of the stream, a mile away but in full sight of the camp, was dammed off and the bed worked down. Where possible the boulders were pried over and their beds scraped for nuggets. But the fissures, due originally to some upheaval in the past and widened by the annual freezings, yielded considerable amounts of gold. Long chisels and narrow iron spoons were contrived to meet every condition, until the collection looked like a set of gigantic dental instruments. An endless amount of hammering was necessary as every bit of the gravel was frozen, but the laborers were amply repaid. The rush of the torrents that came down after every Spring thaw had washed out much of the lighter earth and gravel after the heavier gold had gone to the bottoms.

BY THE END of June the stream bed had been well searched, but Gorman, exploring it once more for good luck, found one spot where his chisel went through into space. Cold chisels and steel wedges were brought into play and a large opening made, revealing a cavity as large as a fifty gallon barrel, half filled with ice and frozen silt. All this had to be hacked out, but easily three thousand dollars' worth of gold was retrieved from beneath it. Needless to say, every fissure was tested and retested before the beach sand was tackled.

The yield from the beach sand and the bar was disappointing, about five thousand dollars' worth got with infinite toil and trouble. In order to get water for the washings, a hole of about a hogshead's capacity had to be dug in the sand and the Blake pump, strongly framed, set up. Every high water filled the hole and was led from the pump into the dump box in the head of the sluice box.

By the end of July everybody was ready to knock off mining and start for civilization, even though there were no particular home ties to draw any one of them. Three of them were talking of having the best dentist in San Francisco look over their teeth. The captain, however, said that he had already looked over his own teeth by simply taking them out. He reported that they were worn down and wondered how the others could have anything in the way of teeth left, considering how steadily and heavily they had eaten during the past eighteen months. The major said that if they had been gluttons, the blame was Den's for being such a fine cook. And Pat expressed the fear that the little boat would not hold enough food for their journey. Captain Holt wasn't so sure on this point himself.

Not a minute, now, was lost. The smoked and dried reindeer meat was carefully packed in the cases that had held canned goods. The other supplies were packed in such containers as would stow well. Den made up the last of the flour into a baking. Coffee, sugar and tobacco were still holding out. As to arms, the captain took his heavier Winchester, Pat a shotgun, and the major stuck to his express. Every man carried a pistol. A fair supply of ammunition was looked out for.

Armament to be left behind was carefully greased and stored on top of the bunks. Den packed all his furs into empty oil barrels and put them in the house. Navigating instruments, of course, had to be taken along, and each man had a big bag for clothes and other belongings—

except oilskins, which they expected to live in. Den had the little oil cooker that Pat and the major had used on their northern hike; it was secured on the cockpit. Unless they should be cast away, there was about enough fuel to see them through. Two lanterns as good as new were put on board, and the water barrel secured in chocks right across the stern. There had to be a great deal of discussion as to the best way to carry the gold. It was finally decided to bag it carefully and head it up in kegs with the hope that it would float in case of disaster.

The boat—not at all amphibian—was a hellion to get across the tundra and down to the beach, and if the four men hadn't been as strong as horses she would have wrecked them. Masts were stepped and stayed, and sails bent. She was then slewed around, head to seaward, with planks and rollers under her. One of the old anchors was dropped well offshore with a very long cable, then brought in taut by a tackle and secured to the foremast. All her lading except the clothes bags and the gold was brought to the bank.

At last the house and workshop were thoroughly nailed up—not that human visitors were likely, but bears would certainly call—and with this ceremony the attacks of homesickness began to reduce the conversation to a minimum. Every one bustled. There was a prevailing disposition not to brook a moment's idleness, and the veriest trifles were seized upon with vigor and intensity, while each man kept an eye on the tide.

Up and up it came and when the old boat—oddly enough nobody had thought to name her—at last showed that she felt the sea under her, there was a half hearted cheer and Red Gorman began to unlimber his Irish tongue. She was carefully laden under Captain Holt's eagle eye, and pulled off with a stern line secured to a crowbar driven into the bed rock. One section of the mining raft was launched and all hands climbed over that and got on board. When Pat lifted old Zeb on deck, the mastiff looked around him with such disgust and then cast such a mournful eye back at his beloved camp that even the major laughed.

"Sure, you're a fat and heavy old devil now," said Pat to the dog, "but you'll get lighter; you'll get lighter."

"Maybe, old boy," said Den. "Maybe."

The boat acted well and even proved pretty smart. The wind held from the east and in a week or so they were up to Cape Prince of Wales. After passing the cape there was a ten day spell of fog and headwinds. Sometimes the captain had to seek shelter back of any island that happened to be the handiest.

A good deal of discomfort and some dangers, perhaps, were lived through. The boat was crowded, but the captain was on his native heath, so to speak, and got all out of her there was to get. And at length—on October tenth—they landed in Sitka. As they were immediately surrounded by a crowd of very inquisitive and doubtful looking people, no one regretted to find that they were just in time to make the last steamer south.

The novelty of San Francisco—civilized hair cuts and civilized clothes—amused and delighted them for a few days. Under Captain Holt's wing the whole company called on Judge Willet, who was surprised to hear that the newspaper men had not got them. But not a word had escaped any one of them, which delighted the judge. He advised them to hold to their course or their lives would be deviled out of them for a nine days' wonder.

Judge Willet undertook to look up connections of Marvin and McCullough. After quite some time it seemed to be pretty definitely established that only one could be found. This was an older sister of McCullough and she was pretty hard up. So without much palaver it was agreed to hand over to her the valuables and money—amounting to over a thousand dollars—that had been found on the bodies of the murderers. This sum was further reenforced by the individual members of the disbanded Kotzebue Mining Company.

THREE LUNGS

By CHARLES PEDEN

Strange Adventures of the Newsreel Men —by One of Them

THE NEWSREEL game offers much to the adventure seeker. No doubt you have often wondered just how some particular shot was obtained as its thrilling angle was revealed on the silver screen. Many times in the course of his day's work the newsreel man exerts himself that you may be entertained. He is a nomadic creature, traveling halfway round the world that you may see how the other half lives; and now with the aid of sound film he lets you "listen in". The element of danger very often enters into his vocation, but he learns to treat it merely as a routine detail.

Between assignments, most of the boys congregate at the Newsreel Club situated in the tower of one of Manhattan's newest skyscrapers. On entering the lounge room of the club the other afternoon I was agreeably surprised to meet an old acquaintance—Steve Powell, ace cameraman of Popular News. After the usual exchange of pleasantries I eased Steve over to my favorite corner and commanded him to give an account of himself. He's an adventuresome devil and I figured he had run into something exciting since I'd last seen him.

"Oh, we've been hopping all over the States, Chic," he answered. "Ted Hastings, he's my new soundman, vows he'll petition the office to buy us a plane if they keep shifting us around. Just came up from San Antonio where we've been stationed for the past nine weeks. Managed to sneak into Mexico for a couple of neat stories, and also to make a flight over the Grand Cañon."

"Was that the one where you flew in an Army A3?" I asked.

"Yes, and believe me for that little

crate to take off with a load of sound equipment was something! We just skimmed over the crags with that cargo. It wasn't even funny."

"Sounds interesting," I observed. "Anything happen?"

"Not on that particular assignment," was the answer. "However, Chic, we did run into a real thrill right near home. Want to hear about it?"

I settled back, lighted my pipe and nodded.

"The day we arrived in New York," Steve began, "from our Western trip, the office was pinched for crews. The assignment editor said it would be necessary for us to hop right up to New London. A device designed to aid the crew of a stricken submarine to escape was going to be demonstrated. The inventor* met us on our arrival at the sub base and outlined the program.

"An old submarine reconstructed for the experiment was to be used. Containing a skeleton crew of ten, it was to descend to the bed of the Thames River and the men were to affect their escape. A special hatch leading from the small compartment abaft the motor room was the means of egress. Assuming the sub is lying below the surface badly damaged, the following routine is observed.

"The crew rushes to the safety compartment and batten the waterproof door, thus isolating themselves from the rest of the vessel. The escape hatch is opened and the outside water is allowed to flow in. It merely rises to a level slightly above the hips, as the air pressure within counteracts the water pressure. Next, a yellow buoy, connected to a rope knotted at fathom intervals, is released. Any searching party on the surface can readily locate this buoy which also serves to mark the spot of the calamity. This being ascertained they stand by to pick up the survivors as they come to the surface. Down below the crew prepares for the escape.

"The special device, 'lung' it is called, is donned. It consists of a rubber clip attached to the nostrils and a mouthpiece connected to a receptacle containing a soda-lime compound. Its purpose is to purify the exhaled breath of the wearer that he may use it over again. In this way he can leisurely guide himself up the buoy rope, counting the fathom knots as he ascends. An occasional halt helps him to decompress. Too rapid a rise would result in the 'bends'.

"We elected to do the outside shots first. A small launch was chartered to carry the sound equipment and camera out to where the sub was to be sunk. With a great deal of hissing and blowing the big hull made a vertical dive. I focused on the spot where the buoy would probably appear. Sure enough, up it bobbed.

" 'Buoy's up,' chanted one of the men in the tender assigned to act as a rescue boat.

"Finally, one of the sub's crew came popping up amid a froth of air bubbles. The rescue squad retrieved him. Removing the lung, he yelled over to me:

" 'Say, this contraption's the business all right. Just like breathing on deck; no unpleasant effects at all.'

"This performance was repeated until the last man to leave the compartment made his appearance, he being the inventor. Right here I want to say he's a swell guy. Every one at the sub base likes the cut of his jib, for he never allows a man to take a chance unless he himself is along.

"The outside shots being completed, we figured a scene from the interior, showing the men passing through the hatch, would be thrilling. The sub was brought to the surface and an inspection of the escape chamber revealed enough space in which to work. The sound apparatus was set on a high shelf running across the front of the compartment. Lieutenant Henson, the officer in charge of the experiment, warned me to mount the camera high in order to escape the water. Incandescent lights in place, ourselves arrayed in bathing suits, everything was ready. We were going to show the public something new.

"The signal to descend was given. I

* Lieut. George Momsen.

might mention here that the officers operating the diving mechanism from the control room had no way of communicating with us as we were barricaded behind the watertight door. This was necessary, otherwise the main part of the sub would be flooded during the tests. There were twelve of us in the little room. We were going down. It's a funny thing about submarines; I've noticed it on other occasions. When you're below the surface penned up in that sweating steel shell you feel absolutely apart from the rest of the world. I daresay you could sink in New York harbor yet feel you were a thousand miles from every one. It was silent, damp; and the air had that heavy, oily odor peculiar to all undersea craft. With a gentle bump we hit bottom. I noticed the sub tilted slightly with the stern up.

"Hastings said the sound outfit was working O.K. Lieutenant Henson watched me for the signal to start. I turned on the camera and motioned him. He snapped out an order and two men spun the clamp wheels. The escape hatch slowly opened and in poured tons of water. Lord, it was cold! Quickly, it mounted to our hips. I could feel the air pressure building up. No. 1 man to go adjusted his lung. He waved to us and with a grin passed through the hatch. As he left, more water swirled in and I could feel it rise a trifle. The second man left, then the third. So engrossed was I in photographing the performance I had not noticed that the water had continued to rise. When I first realized this fact it was up to my chest. I became concerned. If more water entered every time a man left, it would soon reach the camera. At the ninth man, it did. Six thousand dollars, worth of Bell & Howell was about to go blooey. I shouted to the lieutenant but at the same instant my sound man shook my shoulder. I turned. His face was white.

" 'The batteries,' he gasped. 'The recording batteries. The salt water has reached them and they're generating chlorine gas!'

"This was real danger. Just at that moment the lights sputtered out. We were chin deep in water by now. Something was wrong. A word with Lieutenant Henson revealed that the sub could not be floated in less than twenty minutes, as it takes that long to blow the tanks. To open the battened door would have meant disaster to the entire ship. As regards the excess water he felt the fact that the sub was on uneven keel accounted for it. My nostrils began to tingle. The gas was working. Hastings floundered to the aft end of the cubicle away from the batteries. Right about then I decided I preferred a tight place in a plane to this. At least you can bale out with a chute.

"The lieutenant was quite cool.

" 'Follow me,' he commanded.

"Linking hands, we waded toward him. Hastings was coughing and choking horribly. The officer snapped on an emergency light that was mounted in the top of the hull. He opened a locker and pulled out three of his precious lungs. I hadn't paid much attention to how they were attached but, following Henson's lead, I made a pretty good job of it. We didn't waste much time in evacuating the premises. The surface crew picked us up and, after a little first aid, we were O.K. Hastings was a little slow in reviving as he had been tardy in attaching his lung. The inventor came over to me.

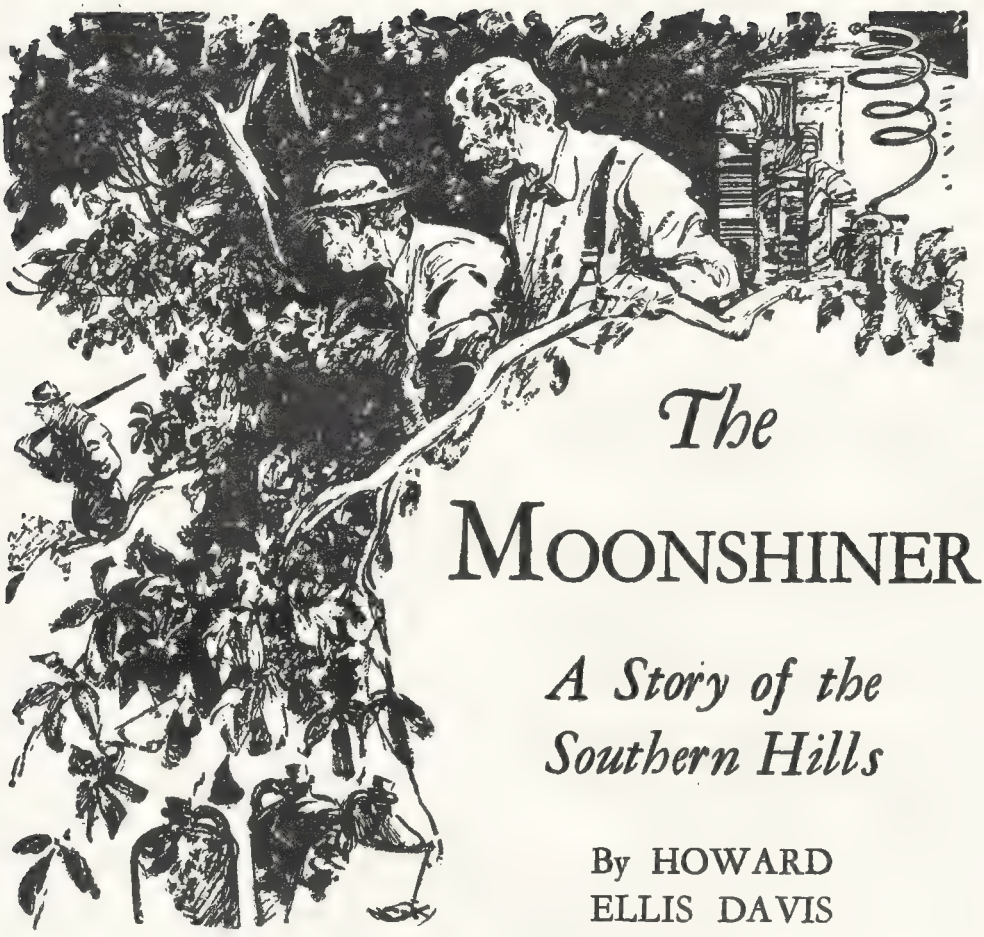
" 'I'll bet you're glad the Navy requires an emergency supply of lungs in every submarine, aren't you?' he said.

" 'And how!' I exclaimed; but I didn't tell him that I'd held my breath all the way to the surface.

"When the sub finally emerged, we went aboard to inspect the damage. What a mess. The film was ruined and the camera a total loss."

"That was certainly a tough break," I sympathized as Powell finished. "After all that grief you didn't have a picture."

"Oh, yes!" he answered. "We sent for another outfit and finished the damn thing the next day."



The MOONSHINER

A Story of the Southern Hills

By HOWARD ELLIS DAVIS

"WHOA! That'll do," called old Tobe Lassiter, the driver.

Jo Potlow, another ancient, unfastened a chain from the front axle and drove his mules to one side, leaving the truck standing on the brow of a commanding ridge, where it could be set in motion again by drifting down the hill.

In his seat on the truck, Tobe leaned tensely forward, listening. Through his old veins pulsed an excitement that thrilled him more than a good hand dealt him at poker; more than a three-pound bass on a singing line and a limber pole; more, even, than a pack of fox hounds in full cry, sweeping by in close pursuit within twenty paces of his horse, while he sat and emitted yells that sounded like the squalls of a wildcat.

Beneath him spread lower hills, grass covered, dew drenched, soft and round. Like silver were the tree branches, their leaves in the moonlight shining metal.

His present calling was in no way respectable. He never claimed that it was. In fact, if he had been discussing the matter with you he would have told you that it was not. But, Lord, the thrill he got out of it! At work about the still with Jo Potlow, the old friend he had hired to help him, he had to be always keenly alert for the unannounced call of some officer of the law. The trips at night into the hills with supplies, and the

trips out with his moonshine were fraught with peril and adventure.

Tobe had entered carefully into this new game. But he always took his sports seriously and that was why, they said of him, that he was usually successful. He had looked over the field of his new undertaking as studiously as if it had been a new poker hand.

Of course, the first thing to be done was to get rid of his sister, Polly, who, with her three children, had lived with him since the death of her husband. Polly might get on to what he was doing. If she did, he reflected seriously, she would raise so much hell with him that she would be sure to cramp his hand.

An old bachelor, he had lived for years by himself before Polly and the children moved in. And the story had grown up about him, as it has about many lonely men, that he was a miser and had money hidden out some place. Polly shared in this belief. The facts were that the old reprobate had very little. Temperamentally averse to work, he let Polly and the children do what farming and gardening there was carried on about the place, while he "traded and trafficked." Sometimes he would win neat little sums at poker. But he had to be very careful about that. If Polly found that he had spent a night at the card table she preached to him, telling him he had added one more day to his time to be spent in hell, atoning for his sins.

When he told his sister that she and the children must move out, Polly wept.

"Oh, Tobie," she wailed, "to think that you, who are so rich an' got plenty of money, should turn me an' my po' little orphins out in the cold!"

"I ain't turnin' you out in the cold," he replied in an injured tone. "It ain't cold. Standin' ninety-six in the shade right now."

Polly, who was seated on the back gallery stringing beans from a pan in her lap, set the pan on the floor. Bowing her head, she covered it with her apron.

"To think," she wailed, "that I should live to see the roof tooken from over the heads of me an' my po' children by my own brother!"

"Polly, them three gals of yourn is likely youngsters, full of git-up an' ambition."

"There's Kate ready for high school. Winnie will be ready in a couple mo' years. An' little Beth is too young to walk them two mile over to school like she'd have to next winter. Up here in the woods there ain't no high school, nor no other advantages like children oughter have. So I'm movin' y'all to town, where you kin have a fair show."

"Oh, Tobie! You mean you're goin' to move us to town an' edicate my children?" Hastily drying her eyes, Polly smiled at him.

Tobe, who was seated on the steps, spat into the yard and avoided her eyes.

"I've done got everything arranged. Done talked with the boss of that there cotton mill, an' he'll give you an' the older gals jobs. Beth's too young to—"

"Me an' my gals work in that there cotton mill?" Polly screamed at him.

"Done got it all arranged. Could have moved you into one of them mill houses; but they ain't a shade tree 'mongst the whole durn passel of 'em. As you know, I likes plenty of shade an' room. So I rented a house for you out on a nice, shady street, where there's a yard an' garden spot. It'll cost you twenty dollars a month; but you always was a good manager, Polly. I've bought a few furnishin's an' had 'em put in the house, to be paid for on the instalmint plan. An' you'll have to watch them monthly paymints, or they'll come an' git the things right from under yo' nose, they tell me. I put in some rations—eight dollars' worth—which the sto'keeper says he'll let run 'gin the time you an' the gals makes a payday. No, suh, I don't know of nothin' I ain't provided for."

And the next morning he loaded Polly's family and their possessions, pitiably few, on the truck and hauled them to town.

This obstacle removed from his path, Tobe set seriously to work on his other plans. Jo Potlow, the old friend who had

agreed to help him, met him at the site which had been decided on for the still.

"What is it to be," Jo asked, "rock furnace an' reg'lar syrup pan, with wood sides?"

"Not on yo' life, Jo. Smoke risin' out of the swamp has give many a po' moonshiner away; or the light of his fire, ef he worked in the night season. The science an' invention of man was meant to be tooken advantage of in this game as well as any other. I'll show you what I want done on the foundation work; but I'm goin' to have a special pan made an' we'll use burners, an' kerosene ile for fuel."

"Tobe," Jo said admiringly, "you always was one to use yo' head. That's why you always succeeds in anything you undertakes."

"An' we ain't goin' to make no shoddy, half run stuff an' 'pend on puttin' the kick in it with concentrated lye, like some of these here fellers is doin'. Our stuff is goin' to be run down jest as nigh to the natural born alcohol as we kin git it. When I haul out a load it'll be the essence, or the foundation, you mought call it. I've already traded with a feller in town, an' he offers the top price, ef we kin make it to suit him—an' I know we kin. He will take it an' mix it with agin' fluid an' colorin' matter an' put it in bottles already labeled with the brands of old makes. He'll send it North to them fancy clubs an' rich folks, where they don't drink nothin' but high priced pre-war stuff."

Tobe had a friend in town, one Peter House, who operated a pipe and tin shop. Peter and Tobe had run together in the hills as boys; but, having a mechanical turn, Peter had moved to town long years ago. He was a true captain of industry. While three young men in the front part of the shop cut and hammered and welded and did whatever else was necessary to pipes and tin, Peter sat near his office door, which opened into a shaded back yard, and chewed and spat into the dust. Even the telephone was on the wall in the front part of the shop, where one of his bright young men could answer it.

"Don't like the durned thing a-goin' off in my ears all the time," he had confided to Tobe. "Puts me in the mind of a 'larm clock."

Tobe carried his plans to his friend and, together, the two old men worked out the details, first one and then the other smoothing out a place in the dust with his hand and drawing with his forefinger. When they had argued out the matter to the satisfaction of both of them, Peter called one of his young men and on a clean piece of board rapidly and skilfully sketched the designs for the paraphernalia and accessories of Tobe's new industry. Then, while they were being made, he and Tobe sat just without the back door in the shade of a chinaberry tree and played checkers or stud poker, ready to answer questions and give directions about the work.

While in town, of course, Tobe stayed with Polly and the children. She had a little shed room which was called his room, anyhow, just as, in her old home, there had always been "Tobie's room." It opened on to the back gallery and could be entered without disturbing any of the household when he came in after they had gone to bed.

The house was neatly kept and Polly and the girls had planted a vegetable garden in the rear and a flower garden in front. The only drawback, Polly told him, was leaving little Beth at home all day by herself. It would be better, she added cheerfully, when school started in the Fall.

AFTER Tobe and Jo had begun the operation of the still, he always spent Sundays with Polly. Coming in during Saturday night with a load of his stuff, he would sleep in his room in town. At eight o'clock, little Beth would go in to him with a cup of steaming coffee. After he had pulled on his clothes, and while he sat barefooted on the edge of the bed, sipping his coffee from the saucer, they

gathered about him, with a hundred things to tell him, and to tell him of a hundred things they had to show him; for the children, like their mother, adored Uncle Tobie. Sunday nights little Beth claimed him for her own and always went to sleep in the old reprobate's lap.

"Jo," he said to his old friend at the still one day, "I wonder how come Polly an' the children makes so much of me. They babies me an' pets me an' shows me as much attention as ef I was a pig in a fattenin' pen. Do you reckin," he added with a worried frown, "it's kase of that there money they think I got buried?"

"Hell, no!" Jo told him emphatically "Chillun wouldn't never think of sich. An' Polly ain't got politics enough. I reckin' they jest sees traits in you the rest of us ain't never diskivered."

"Polly ain't got no politics at all," Tobe said with relief. "Not where I'm consarned, nohow. Gives me hell at the least provocation. An' now that there oldest gal of hers has started pickin' on me. Why she lit in on me kase I ain't had my hair cut for two, three months.

"'Uncle Tobie,' she says to me, 'ef you come to town next week with yo' hair still hangin' down yo' back, I'll plait it an' tie it with a red ribbon, then make you walk down the street with me with yo' hat off.' An' she'd do it, too. Goldurn her hide, she'd jest as soon do it as not. They don't give me no peace, Jo. It's first one thing, then two.

"Funny thing, though," he added, "I'm beginnin' to sorter enjoy their peckin'. Makes a man feel kinder—kinder—oh, hell, kinder somethin'—to have wimmin folks takin' enough intrust in him to nag. Have you got any scissors over to yo' house stout enough to crap my hair with?"

"I got some shearin' tongs I been shearin' my sheep with."

"Better bring 'em over tomorrow, old-timer. Better bring 'em over an' work on me. I dassent go back to town with my hair still hangin' over my collar."

One Monday, Tobe remained over in town, instead of leaving at daylight, as was his usual custom. He said he had some business to attend to. But he returned to Polly's house in time to cook midday dinner for him and Beth, and they spent the afternoon in the back yard playing mumble peg and wild cat's kittens and old black bear. When Polly and the two older girls returned from work, he led the way into the kitchen and seated himself at the table.

"Polly," he said, "pay attention to me an' keep this here thing straight in yo' head, kase it's very important—say, you gals, stop that chatterin' an' come over here an' listen at me, kase I know yo' ma will git it mixed up, sho as hell."

"Tobie!"

Drawing something from the breast pocket of his shirt, he placed it on the table.

"Ef I ain't done sweat on the durned things!" he exclaimed. "But I don't reckin' it'll hurt 'em none. Say, Polly, do you remember Ben Tate whose folks used to live in the big house over on Walnut Hill?"

"In course I remembers Ben Tate. You an' him used always to be off fox huntin' when *you* oughter been workin'."

"Waal, Ben owns the bank here an'—"

"Land sakes! Ben Tate's livin' here in town?"

"Yes. An' keep quiet, Polly, for heaven's sake, till I git through explainin', 'fo' I forgit it myself. You see this here little book—"

"You got it upside down, Uncle Tobie," Kate interrupted him.

"Waal, Polly—" as he turned it about —"this here figger what's writ in there with pen an' ink is the amount I placed to the account of yo' credit in the bank."

"To the credit of her account," Kate said breathlessly, leaning close.

"Dammit all, Kate, ef you butts in on me again I'll slap you."

"Go on," Kate said, shaking him, not at all impressed by his threat.

"This here little long feller is what they calls a checkbook. Don't lose it, kase these here checks is the only way

in God's world you got of gittin' the money out. You writes the amount to be drawed, signs yo' name, then tears it off where these here holes is punched. I explained to Ben you kin sign yo' name an' that when it's first did you an' the Lord kin read it, but that when it's got cold only the Lord himself kin make out what it is. He said that would be all right an' that one of the gals kin write out the other part. He wants yo' signature on this here little card to be kept at the bank for reference. You been followin' me, Polly?"

"I—I don't know whether I kin ever keep all that straight," she said in bewilderment.

"Waal, ef you git mixed up, Ben will straighten you out. He wants to see you anyhow, he says, an' talk over old times."

"But, Tobie, how come you to dig up yo' money an' put it in the bank for me an' the children? An' how are you goin' to manage for yo'self?"

"School will soon be startin' an' they'll have to have a few little doodabs—clothes an' sich. An' you'll want to be at home to keep house for 'em."

"But how you goin' to make out ef you turn all yo' money over to us?"

"Oh, maybe I left a little still buried out for myself," he replied, his eyes twinkling.

Presently word came up into the hills to Tobe from Buck Henley, the sheriff.

"Buck says," the sheriff's messenger told him, "that you had better see him right away an' make yo' arrangemints."

Tobe was outraged. It hurt his feelings that Buck held him in such contempt as to think he would pay the sheriff a royalty for protection, as some of the others were doing. He thought that Buck knew how he, Tobe, regarded him. Certainly he had never failed to express his opinion of a man who had taken an oath to uphold the law and then brought to justice only those who failed to pay for immunity. His elaborate precautions, so shrewdly worked out, had been unnecessary. The thrills he had experienced in thinking that he was evading Buck and his deputies had been without foundation. Buck had not intended to molest him—just let him operate; then, at the logical time, have Tobe begin paying him a weekly sum to be let alone.

"You tell Buck," he replied to the messenger, "that old Tobe Lassiter says go straight to hell!"

Later, Jo Potlow remonstrated with him.

"Tobe," he said, "you're a blamed fool."

"In lots of ways, I reckin. In what particular way was you referrin' to?"

"In not payin' Buck to let you alone. In course it goes agin the grain. But you know what happened to Wes Logan when he helt out on Buck, an' to the Jelson boys."

"I'm playin' this here game for high stakes, Jo; but I ain't playin' with no stacked deck. Besides, what fun would I git out of it ef I made it all legal an' proper by payin' that damned crooked varmint to let me alone?"

"You're in the game for what money you're gittin' out of it, ain't you, Tobe?"

"Money! I ain't never had no money, an' never will, I don't reckin. There's somethin' means mo' to me than money. Ain't none of my people ever been folks. But Polly an' her gals is goin' to be. Them's the stakes I'm playin' for. But I'm goin' to play this here game straight. You ain't never heard of me shootin' no quail on the ground, have you? You ain't never heard of me dynamitin' a stream to catch fish. You ain't never heard of me shootin' a deer out of season. You ain't never knowed me to cheat at cards. An', by thunder, I ain't goin' to begin at my time of life to let my sportin' blood git so thin as to pay that there polecat to let me make likker."

WORD came back from Buck Henley that he was going to get Tobe and make an example of him. And thereupon began the game of hide and seek between the sheriff and his deputies and the old rep-

robate of the backwoods who was a champion of clean sport and a hog for the thrill he got out of it.

The truck which he employed in bringing in his supplies and hauling out his moonshine, the fruit of one of his trades several years previous, was loose jointed and full of noise. When in high gear, the exhaust sounded as if some one were hammering on a piece of loose tin. When in low, the noise was indescribable. When they began their operations, he had confided to Jo—

"Old Bedelia's reliable enough; but she's like some other females I've knowed—she makes too much fuss."

Out on the main roads, where she had plenty of company, Bedelia's rattle and bang made no particular difference. In the woods, both going in to the still and coming out again, Tobe had Jo hitch a pair of mules to her front end and silently tow the ancient vehicle wherever she had to go.

Buck now kept two deputies in the hills, with instructions to locate Tobe's still, and to be on the lookout and intercept him if they caught him coming out with a load of his stuff. If there had been informers in the backwoods, which there were not, they could have done the deputies little good, because nobody but Tobe and Jo knew where the still was. Tobe's friends were not long in bringing the information to him that these men were depending on two sources of information: They were watching for the smoke of a new fire in the swamps, and they expected to be able, several miles distant on a quiet night, to hear Bedelia's efforts at locomotion.

So one evening after sundown Tobe had Jo, against his protests, tow the truck to a certain point in the woods. There he loaded it heavily with stovewood. About nine o'clock he started over the uneven road for the house of a neighbor, who had split the wood from round, sawed blocks and was letting it dry before hauling it in. The quiet hills echoed and re-echoed with Bedelia's noisy exhalations. As he emerged from a pine thicket and rounded a curve, he suddenly found his way blocked by a pole which had been dragged across the road. When he stopped, two men stepped out and covered him with shotguns.

In mock terror, Tobe was loud in his protestations of innocence. They only laughed at him. While one held him at the point of his gun, the other threw off the load of wood, expecting to find beneath each layer the goods for which they sought.

"It's a outrage," Tobe shouted shrilly, when the man had finished and the two looked at each other in puzzled surprise, "when a old man like me can't even haul a load of stovewood 'thout some of that there damn crooked sheriff's bunch a-buttin' in an' interferin'!"

Leaving him still shouting after them, they walked off into the night. The wood had been brought a mile and a half nearer its destination, for which Tobe's neighbor was grateful, and Tobe had played a joke on Buck's men that gave him chuckling amusement for several days.

One day he built a fire in the swamp several miles from the still. After letting it burn until he felt sure it had been observed and its location made note of, he put it out and buried all trace. He was hidden in the bushes nearby when Buck and his men made their raid that night—to find nothing.

He played this joke a second time, in another place. But the smoke rose for three days in succession before the deputies, sure they could not be mistaken this time, reported the matter to Buck, who again came out.

Buck fired the two deputies and replaced them with others, one of them Ellis Hicks, for whom he had sent down into another county. He placed a third man over to the north and a fourth over to the south. Buck, himself no mean hunter of men, began scouting trips among the hills.

"You've done carried it too far," Jo told him complainingly, "jest like I knowed you would. Buck is out to git yo' hide sho enough, now. An' that man

Hicks ain't nobody to fool with. You know that, well as me."

"Hicks has got brains," Tobe replied. "Waal, it'll be brains agin brains, which it ain't been, up to now. But there ain't goin' to be no mo' playin' of tricks. It'll be trick enough for old Tobe Lassiter to make his stuff an' git it out 'thout gittin' caught." But he chuckled gleefully and rubbed his horny old palms together.

In spite of the net that seemed to be slowly closing about him, Tobe continued periodically to slip out his load of moonshine. Systematically he disposed of the stakes which he had won at this desperate game of chance, because he knew that at almost any time his career as a free citizen might be ended. Ben Tate, his old friend who ran the bank in town, helped him in this. Of course the banker suspected where the money came from that Tobe brought to him. He called Tobe an unregenerate old scoundrel and pleaded with him to mend his ways, but he gave unstintedly of his advice and help in the old moonshiner's financial affairs.

"But, Tobe, you damned old reprobate," he told him, not without a twinkle of admiration, "the only reason that I don't feel as guilty as you are is that you are putting one over on that crooked bunch at the sheriff's office; and I do heartily approve of the use you are making of the money you are getting out of it."

A few weeks after he had made the deposit in the bank in Polly's name, providing for their keep while the girls went to school that winter, Tobe brought to her a deed to the house which they had been renting.

"It's made out in yo' name an' recorded at the cote house," he told her. "I'm gittin' sort of old an' unreliable an' thought that while I was able to see after it you an' the gals ought to be provided with a house over yo' heads."

He next placed in trust with the banker a sum which would insure the high school education of the girls. Then, following Ben Tate's advice, he purchased for himself a half interest in his friend's tin and pipe shop, the additional capital being used in putting in more equipment and in increasing the force by two more young men.

"And now," said the banker, "you've got to stop moonshining and settle down in town as a respectable citizen. You've done handsomely by Polly and the girls; you can make a living in the shop with Peter House. And I want you here where I can keep my eye on you. You've made a monkey out of Buck Henley. He'll probably get you, sooner or later, if you keep on. But you can quit now with the laugh still on your side."

"Ben," Tobe said reflectively, "do you remember the old bobtailed fox that played sich devilmint among Lige Sibley's lambs one spring? They couldn't nobody pizen, trap nor catch him with dogs. It was said that he couldn't be caught. But I caught him, didn't I? Waal, I've sot my hand to catch a fox that's even slyer an' meaner. I've seen Buck Henley grow up. Even mo' than you, I know him for what he is. He's strutted an' mouthed around here an' got himself elected sheriff. You an' some of the other good citizens of the county have 'lectioneered an' orated, tryin' to beat him; but he's only seemed to grow stronger. But I'll git him. You needn't laugh, Ben. You think it's funny for a old hickory nut headed moonshiner to talk that way. But I went into this here game to git him. In course I knowed it would be full of fun an' excitemint—an' you know how I like excitemint, Ben. The money part has only come along as a side issue. I'm goin' to git that crooked skunk an' nail his hide to the cote house do', goldarn him!"

"Tobe," the banker said gravely, "you call yourself a clean sportsman. Do you think it sportsmanlike to break the laws of your country?"

"You know, Ben, that the only sin I think there is connected with the likker business is drinkin' the blamed stuff. You know that."

"Regardless of what your views are on

the likker question, Tobe, in spite of your very worthy ambition to run Buck Henley out of office, you are breaking the law. And that is not sportsmanlike."

"I hadn't never thought of it in that light," Tobe said, taking off his battered old hat and rubbing his head. "I sho hadn't. Damned ef I had."

Jo also was prolific with advice from another angle.

"Now," he said, "is the time to quit, while the quittin's good. That man Hicks is gittin' plum' bothersome. You talk of makin' folks out of Polly an' her gals. What kind of folks would they be with a brother an' uncle layin' up in jail, doin' time for makin' likker?"

Tobe had been broodingly silent since his last trip to town and his talk with the banker. Now he snarled at Jo:

"That there varmint ain't goin' to run me out the likker business. I've sot out to git Buck Henley, an' I'm a-goin' to git him, by grabs!" And his old jaw set more stubbornly than ever.

THE NEXT truckload which he smuggled out from the hills and sold at the highest market price added enough to the money already in the bank, so Ben Tate told him, to send Kate to college.

It seemed for a time as if Winnie and Beth would have to be satisfied with high school diplomas. Buck's men had not discovered the location of the still; but they now guarded carefully the roads leading out of the woods. Tobe knew that Bedelia, even when towed by the mules and running silently, could not pass undetected.

"Here's Winnie's college edication all made an' put up, ready to go out," he complained to Jo, "an' them varmints a-squattin' over every hog trail."

Every night, as silently as an Indian, the old man went out on his scouting expeditions; but he found the vigilance unremitting. Maddened by Tobe's defiance and continued activity, Buck had increased his force of deputies. Tobe was now notorious throughout the county. Those who kept informed about such matters knew that he was making and selling moonshine whisky, and that he had defied the sheriff to catch him. Buck's political backers told him that if he expected a dog's chance in the next election he had better get a wiggle on.

Hicks was in charge of the deputies assigned to the duty of catching old Tobe Lassiter. Each had his individual post or beat, while he, as a sort of corporal of the guard, ranged the woods from one to the other.

But at last, one stormy night, Tobe found a road unguarded. The man who was supposed to patrol it had sought shelter in a deserted log cabin on the hill, perhaps thinking that the road, which followed a swamp, would be impassable in such weather.

But Tobe knew that road, knew it well enough to risk it. In a downpour of rain, he and Jo loaded the truck and with the mules tugging in front and Tobe working with a pole at the back in the softest places, they wallowed through to the highway. Just as a late, stormy dawn was breaking, Tobe mounted Bedelia. His load of moonshine camouflaged with corn fodder, he sailed away to town.

Eventually the persistent sheriff was ranging the hills on either side of the still. It was on a little stream at the bottom of a ravine with overhanging banks, thick with rhododendron. One could have gone by within ten feet without seeing it.

"He ain't on to the fact that we're usin' an ile burner," Tobe said to Jo, "an' he's lookin' for the smoke. But ef he was to git the right whiff of this here mash, he'd follow it up the wind like a p'inter dog scentin' a covey of birds."

For weeks the two old men lay close, doing nothing. New supplies would have to be brought in. Their stock of kerosene was all but exhausted. The wherewithal for little Beth's college career was very slow in evolving. And during these days Tobe was mighty poor company.

"Jo," he said one afternoon as the

shadows in the woods lengthened, " 'spose somebody was to tell you that I am a po' sportsman—that I don't hold by the rules of the game."

"Why, I'd tell him he was a blamed liar, Tobe; an' ef I had anything handy, I'd whale him over the head. Everybody knows that ef there is ary true sportsman in the world it's you. What makes you ax sich a fool question?"

"Jest crep' in my mind, Jo," Tobe said uneasily. "Jest crep' in my mind."

"This here game we're playin' now is gittin' plum monotonous," Jo complained.

"I'm goin' to quit it, Jo."

Jo, who was reclining on the grass, sat up and looked at him.

"Now that's a wise thing to do, Tobe. I likes to see a man ain't afraid to acknowledge when he's whipped."

Tobe spat in disgust.

"I ain't whipped, Jo. It ain't that. I'm leavin' this here varmint, Buck Henley, still runnin' loose, when I swore to git him an' it hurts me to do it. But I'm quittin'."

"Ef it ain't kase we're hemmed in an' they ain't nothin' else to do, what brung you to this wise decision, Tobe? What at last put some sense in yo' head?" But Tobe wouldn't tell him why he was quitting.

"Where you think we better bury the stuff we got made?" Jo asked.

"We ain't goin' to bury it, Jo. I'm goin' to take it out."

"You mustn't try it, Tobe. You'll git caught, sho as hell."

"Yep; I'm goin' out one mo' time, play one last hand, make another fool of Buck Henley, git another good laugh on him 'fo' I quit."

"Don't be a-braggin' too soon," Jo warned him. "You know the old sayin' that he who laughs last sometimes laughs the loudest. You've been gittin' lots of fun out of makin' sich a fool of Buck Henley, an' you've had considerable to say 'bout what folks Polly an' the gals will be when the gals is edicated an' sot up to make a high way in the world. But you ain't played yo' last hand *yit*. Buck's still got plenty of time to do a little laughin' himself. Remember election time is drawin' nigh. He'll git you or bust a hamstring. An' ef he do catch you, high steppin' gals like them of Polly's wouldn't tech a cent made by a damned old moonshiner, servin' time."

"Ain't no use in tryin' to scare me out of the notion to play this here last hand, old timer. Though I know you're dead right 'bout Polly an' the gals. They're church members in good standin'. An' when I'm in town of a Sunday, they always takes me to church with 'em, with a new suit on an' a biled shirt an' a stiff collar, roped up with a necktie that chokes hell out of me. An' the preacher is at the do' when we comes out an' shakes me by the hand an' calls me Brother Lassiter. Makes me feel plum' respectable. You're right, Jo. No doubt of it. Ef Polly was to find out that this here money come from moonshinin', 'stead of bein' dug out the ground some place, where I'm supposed to've been hoardin' an' miserin' it, though Lord knows how she thinks I got it in the first place, she an' the gals would go right smack back in the cotton mill. But I'm goin' to play this last hand, Jo. Yes, sir, in spite of hell an' high water, I'm goin' to play this here last hand."

THE WEEKS rolled by and the time of the full moon approached. Tobe was like himself again. Since his decision to play one last hand and quit, the moodiness had dropped from him. He gave Jo several lectures on sportsmanlike conduct. He was scathing in his criticism of any who would not stand by the rules of the game.

One night the moon shone gloriously. It was a night on which unprotected moonshiners would be expected to lie quiet. On such a night the guardians of the law could relax their vigilance, certain that no one would risk his liberty by venturing out with a load of contraband. Counting on this knowledge, it was the night Tobe Lassiter selected to be

abroad. A preliminary scouting expedition found no one on guard. It was the night when, seated on his truck, he paused on the brow of the ridge, ready to release the brake and drift silently for nearly two miles down through the hills.

He eased up his foot and the truck slowly started. It gained momentum until, from time to time, he had to curb its headlong flight with the brake. Rolling out upon the level ground at the foot of the slope, it had almost stopped when he saw that a log lay across the road.

His old heart skipped a beat, but he sat with head erect, tense, alert, as he stopped the truck with its front wheels resting against the log. He knew exactly what to expect.

From each side of the tree fringed road stepped a man, leveling a shotgun at his head. A third man followed one of them.

"Ain't no use in all that there display of artillery," Tobe said sarcastically. "I ain't armed with nothin' mo' than a pocket knife. Ef it's money you're after, I ain't got none."

The third man laughed. It was Buck Henley, the sheriff. Coming to the wheel of the truck, he looked up at the old moonshiner.

"Caught you at last, Tobe," he said. "Give a mouse long enough an' it'll come out of its hole. Hicks, here, has had you same as caught for two weeks."

The men relaxed when they saw the philosophic spirit in which Tobe took his arrest. Grounding his shotgun, one of them, a tall, brown eyed man, leaned against the truck.

"I've caught a lot of 'em, Mr. Lassiter," he said with respect, "but ain't none of 'em give me the chase you have. You've been as full of tricks as a cage of monkeys. It taken me some time to git on to the fact that you was towin' yo' truck with mules, but even then I couldn't catch you at it. An' I must confess that I ain't never yet got on to where yo' still is. I b'lieve you must move it from place to place. I taken my men out the woods. Knowin' how tricky you are, I had a hunch you'd be stirrin' tonight, so we got ready for you. It was only a hunch I played, an' jest by chance we got you. I'll have to take my hat off to you as the best I've ever run up agin."

"Buck," Tobe said complainingly, "this ain't the first time yo' men has stopped me when I was tryin' to do a little haulin'. One night I was haulin' a load of stovewood for a neighbor when they helt me up an' th'owed all the wood off. It's a shame for you to keep a-pesterin' a ole man like me, 'specially as I've knowed you since you was a little shirt-tail boy, growin' up at yo' ma's do' with the chickens an' the other young-uns. It ain't sportin' of you."

"Boys, here it is," Buck, who had gone to the rear of the truck, shouted to the others. "In ten-gallon containers. The truck is full of 'em." His arm was thrust beneath the fodder.

"Tobe, I've heard you make the best likker that comes out of this neck of the woods, an' gits the best price. I'll have to sample some of it." From the pocket of his coat the sheriff took a small glass, removed the stopper from one of the containers. "I been gittin' the messages you been sendin' me; but I reckon you'll have to acknowledge, now, the shoe's on the other foot."

Still jeering over his shoulder at Tobe, he tilted the container. The glass ran over and some of the liquor slopped on the ground.

"You'll have time to think of all that while you're layin' in jail," he said as a parting shot, as he held the glass at arm's length.

Buck's mouth was large and his throat was wide. With one gulp, he tossed off the contents of the glass.

For a moment he stood with a look of stupefaction overspreading his face, while the glass slipped from his nerveless fingers. Then, clapping both hands to his stomach, he doubled over.

"Boys, I'm pizened!" he yelled. "That old hyena has layed for me an' pizened me."

In violent contortions he rolled on the ground, still calling to the others that he was poisoned, and that he was dying of it. One deputy bent anxiously above him, but Hicks sniffed at the container, unstoppered the others, sniffed at them all.

"Well I'll be damned," he said softly. "Git up from there, Buck. This here ain't nothin' but a load of kerosene ile, an' I don't reckin kerosene's pizen. That explains it. That explains why we couldn't never see no smoke. He's cookin' his stuff with kerosene ile. I reckin his still must be across the road, on that other creek." He seemed much more concerned over his discovery than he was over the condition of his chief. "Ef we had only knowed, we could have laid low an' watched him go into the still with this here load."

Buck was violently sick and presently seemed to feel some better.

"Why didn't you tell me what I was a-drinkin'?" he stormed at Tobe. "I'm a good mind to shoot yo' head off!"

"I don't recall invitin' you to have no drink, Buck."

"Pretty slick of you, Mr. Lassiter, to cook yo' stuff with ile, an' so give out no smoke or fire."

"But we caught you at it," Buck snarled. "We know yo' game now."

"How do you know what this here ile is for?" old Tobe suddenly stormed at the sheriff. "We ain't got no 'lectric lights out here in the woods. We uses ile to see by, an' ef I wants to bring in a supply of kerosene, I don't see that it's none of yo' damn business. What right have you got to stop me?"

Buck was about to reply with fine sarcasm; but he was seized with another paroxysm of nausea.

"Boys," he complained, "you'll have to git me to a doctor."

"I don't reckin you'll come to no harm, ef you don't try to smoke, an' so maybe set somethin' on fire inside of you," Hicks soothed his chief.

Drawing him aside, he talked earnestly to him in a low tone. Then—

"Ef you insist, Buck, we'll have to run you on into town. As Mr. Lassiter says, we ain't got no right to stop him from haulin' kerosene ile."

Apparently they paid no more attention to Tobe who, climbing down from the truck, had raised the hood and seemed busily engaged with some of the wiring. Leaving him, they walked off down the road.

No sooner were they out of sight then he slipped into the bushes and followed them. Within a few hundred yards the rough settlement road ran into one of the county's highways. Beside this stood an automobile. Buck and one of the deputies got into the car, but when it drew away, he saw that Hicks had been left behind.

"Thinks he'll follow me to the still afoot," Tobe muttered, chuckling.

Returning to the truck, he removed the log, cranked up and drove on, turning presently into the highway.

"Now catch me ef you kin," he shouted, his voice drowned by Bedelia's rattle and bang as she tore down the road at twenty-five miles an hour.

Half encircling the town, he turned presently into the dark hallway of a barn that stood near the road. Some one in the darkness closed the barn door after him. By the light of a lantern, he threw off the fodder from the truck. Then, tilting each container on edge, he loosened some bolts at the bottom with a pair of pliers and lifted an outer shell from over a round, flat ended drum. The drums were full of moonshine whisky. At the top of each shell was a small receptacle which contained a gallon or two of kerosene oil.

Though he had not caught him, Buck made capital of the fact that Tobe had left the hills and moved to town. But when it seemed certain that the sheriff would be re-elected to another period of graft and misdirected justice, Tobe whispered a little joke to some of his associates which spread from mouth to mouth, and Buck went down in ridicule.

In behalf of the new sheriff-to-be Tobe made a speech. It wasn't a very long speech. Among other things he said:

"Upholdin' the law is a game. Breakin' the law is a game. One of 'em is a sportin' proposition. The other one ain't. Take yo' choice. The choice you makes depends on whether or not you are a clean sport."

In spite of the fact that the owners spend much of their time beneath the shade of a chinaberry tree just outside the office door, the firm of House and Lassiter does a flourishing business. Their principal revenue, however, comes from the royalties on two patents. One of these covers the rights on a milk can with a separate compartment for holding ice; the other has to do with a syrup pan heated by an especially constructed oil burner. Ben Tate sometimes confides to Tobe that, in spite of himself, the old reprobate is growing wealthy.

And Tobe has been heard to complain to Polly—

"I'm gittin' to be so dadblamed respectable it hurts!"

Stopping a Native War

By E. E. HARRIMAN

BACK in the early days of American occupation of the islands where Aguinaldo and other *datos* raised merry Hades, Colonel Partello was made governor of the south province of one island. To make sure of his earning his pay, one *dato* enlisted a lot more little brown devils and doubled his robberies and killings by way of greeting Partello.

When the troops crowded these bolo men hard and did some very accurate shooting, the daughter of the *dato* came to Colonel Partello to appeal for less severity.

Was the *dato* ready to stop his war and be good? Certainly not. But he hated those guns that shot straight, and his dutiful daughter was out to get concessions without conceding anything. While she talked, her *sarong* began to slip. She grabbed for it hurriedly, pulling it in and around her slim body.

For some reason unknown to the jury, the colonel happened to be possessed of two safety pins. He gave them to the girl, showing her how to use them. Only God and the colonel know whether he put them in place or not, but he says the girl left in high glee, snugly and safely pinned up. Seeing her delight, Colonel Partello secured a gross of safety pins and began to give them to native women.

The entire supply distributed, the gallant colonel wondered if there was any other trick left to him, but his orderly announced that Dato Umpty-Ump desired an audience and a short, muscular little scrap of scrappy humanity entered.

He was smiling cheerfully and his right hand was extended. He spoke Spanish rapidly, announcing that the war was finished, done, wound up and, from then on until time ended, his people and the Americans were *amigos*.

"All the women are wild over the new way of making a *sarong* do its duty and stick strictly to business, and they say that there must be no more war against those who gave them safety pins."

In effect, this was the sum of his speech and it found Partello perfectly willing to make a treaty. The fun of it is that the safety pin treaty held perfectly, where some others failed, though made with pomp and ostentation.

A Story of the Wild Folk

No Muff

By F. ST. MARS

IN THE snow covered forest as night stole on a stillness had settled down that surely could not be duplicated on this earth. The slightest noise, that would have been completely overlooked by day, became magnified out of all proportion by night; and from absurd distances the howl of a wolf or crack of snow laden branch could be heard with a distinctness that was almost terrifying. The wraith-like passage of a white wood hare was transformed to the thudding of a galloping horse, and the hoot of a great eagle-owl a mile away, to the bellowing throb of a war drum.

Even the mink, alias nertz, alias sumpf-otter, as she came sidling and undulating up from the frozen stream—a shadow that hugs a shadow as a bubble hugs the side of a cup—could not be wholly unaware of the fact that the light tread of her naked soled paws upon the deep snow was magnified into the scrunch of a bear's footfall. Perhaps she cursed the fact, because the hare's mobile long ears switched together over in her direction, with the result—no hare.

The mink stopped, peering over a stump with her little flat wedge of a head, as if a trifle amazed, after so painfully unraveling the trail by scent alone, to find herself so close to a supper she could not have been two yards behind all the way up from the frozen stream. Yet she must have been used to that special kind of trail. Indeed, she specialized in scents—had a scent of her own that was unforgivable—and, by the same token, for all the use she made of her beady cruel eyes at times, they might almost have been done without.

Indisposed for a long stern chase at start of a night that was, in spite of matted, dense, soft undercoat already almost numbing her, but aware that cold hath terrors for the wild folk only upon an

empty stomach, she stood with arched back and head up—all length without height—looking about, a lone figure in the immensities of Nature. An atom that, if measured by the will to dare, was about the size of a bull moose.

You see her, an odd, long, low, lithe form, hard as nails, keen, curious and cruel. Her face was not nice, but her rare, soft, light yellowish brown pelt was very beautiful indeed, and her longish bushy tail, with rare white tip, finished her off to perfection.

Really she had no business in this place. Her realm was the stream; and her half webbed sturdy feet proved that, at least. But the stream had locked her out. Like the otter, though less perfect in water craft, she was forced to land and—chance it. She must live somehow.

Like all her tribe, the mink depended entirely upon her nose. Too low to see far, her view of the world was a vision of scents. If she sat up to make a watch-tower of herself, 'twas almost her sole aid to vision.

Then she dropped to all fours, quickly, eagerly. A delectable odor pulled her.

Our mink—Wavey, since her passage was a succession of nearly faultless curves—headed for it, circling a little, following up, casting about, wary and keyed up, but drawn surely on.

Then she stopped. She stopped so long, and remained so absolutely motionless, with her little white chin resting upon a sloping fallen—*or felled*, O Wavey!—small tree trunk, that one would scarce have realized that she was not looking over the obstacle, but up it, at the *bonne bouche* which was actually within only a few feet of her, up along the bole. Then she jumped on to the latter.

She ran up the slope. She paused, poised, peering. She seized the food, which was now dead, but had been alive once, or a part of something alive, and—another tree beside the first turned over bodily in the utter stillness like a tree in a nightmare, and fell with a miniature crash and a cascade of snow, smack bang upon the tree the mink was upon.

Wavey was caught in a deadfall trap—caught in a deadfall trap for the value of her fine soft fur. Then—then, nothing . . .

THE SNOW did not move, the forest did not move, the blue-black dome of heaven did not move. All remained still and stern and frozen. Nobody had seen. Nothing cared.

The crash of falling branch or tree naturally under its burden of snow might be heard echoing through the forest any hour of the day or night. Of what account one less or more; or one mink less or more, if it came to that? All wild folk were too busy avoiding a like, or worse, fate at the hands of God or man to trouble about Wavey. Besides, minks were hated enough, anyway.

Not that Wavey asked for mercy, mark you. She came of a hard breed to whom the word "surrender" was the forbidden thing. Giving no quarter herself, she expected none. She writhed and doubled up, and undoubled and doubled up the other way, and contortionized in silence.

Presently, gradually, she ceased to writhe. Her body, it seemed, that part of it hanging from the shoulder downward, her thick little hindlegs, her pretty bushy tail, were dead. Only her head lived, rolling upon the shoulders like a head in delirium, her head, and her burning eyes, and her face—grimacing at the night.

If you had seen that face, unprepossessing enough, at the best of times, you would have shuddered and looked away. One scarcely dared think—I even, never knew—that such a face could exist outside of hell. But it was a white light upon Nature's peculiar genius as a dramatist—in dressing her actors for their parts. What man could in cold blood conceive, and in skin and fur and bone execute, the demoniacal frightfulness of a face like that?

Yet it was the face of the mink. If one knew the mink—of all the thousands

trapped, how few, how very, very few, are studied by anybody—if one understood the cold, cool, calm, calculating cruelty of the beast, one would have recognized at once that, of course, no other face would really have done.

A wolf, lean, loose, gray and slouching, appeared as suddenly as a ghost from among the trees, looked about for a moment, and as suddenly vanished. Time passed, and a shadow grew out of the blackness where the moon held no sway. It paused, it peered around, its eyes shone, it revealed a whiskered, tuft eared face, set with the cynical grin of a lynx, and faded back again. A sable came presently, rippling, low and snake-like; it sat up; it looked straight at the motionless mink, but could not have seen her, and galloped off.

To the sable was succeeded, in the dim emptiness of time, a white hare, whisking over the snow, ephemeral as a wraith, which stopped to scratch one mobile ear with one long hind foot right under the leaning deadfall, before, catching the deadly scent above, she hurtled away.

Then—after ages, it seemed—a wildcat, slouching, two yards away on the windward side. Had it been on the leeward side, Wavey must surely have died right then. A herd of reindeer followed the cat, scraping here and there with their great splayed hoofs for moss and lichen. The old bull must have winded Wavey, for he crashed his antlers upon the deadfall two or three times, but the mink never moved. She appeared to be quite dead at last.

Death's own coldest hour before dawn passed somehow, during which nothing moved or spoke except a tree crashing down somewhere under its intolerable burden of snow, a very avalanche of sound in that setting that, however, drew attention to the silence.

At last dawn flecked the blue-black sky with steely gray, and the dawn wind went soughing through the fir spires to meet it.

Ordinarily Wavey might have hoped to see her mate about this time. Going down or coming up the quite well marked pathway to their hole in the stream bank, he must have scented, he might have helped, her. But minks, like some, perhaps all, other weasel clansmen, have a penchant, like the Vikings of old, for going off upon periodic forays, which may take them a day or may take them a week, but from which, if alive, they almost surely return. Thus then it was with Wavey's consort—he was away scalp hunting. Who could say when he would be back?

Then came the wildcat, back from his hunting—unsuccessful apparently, by the bored look on his face. By the same token, naturally, he was a walking pack o' trouble. And he scented the mink this time. The only marvel was he had not done so before, for I tell you, of all the unholy and variously compounded stinks patented by the members of that clan of stink specialists, the weasels, next to the skunk, and perhaps the polecat, the mink is the worst.

WITHIN half an hour the wildcat had worn a path in the snow a-prowling round that deadfall. But prowling had not given him courage. And it is written that none without courage shall prevail against the weasel people. Trouble was, Wavey might still miraculously be alive, though by all the laws of reason she ought to be dead. Also she grinned as a demon might grin through a red hot gibbet in hell. Also she smelled, and cats have some peculiar opinions about smells. Wavey can scarcely have been much over a couple of feet long, if any, but—well, what have I said?

Finally came the red fox, through the red dawn, after, I dare bet, a red night. He stopped. He saw. He smelled. He understood.

Your canine—fox or dog—has a certain sense of humor; it saves so much trouble. Red Reynard skirmished in, rocking, prancing, on his toes. He would have yapped, but he remembered cousin wolf. He got on the nerves of the cat, as he

knew he would, and that worthy retired into the branchy ways.

Reynard sat down to prospect the mink.

Then he sniffed. Then he sneezed. *Whiff!* My, but Dame Nature had given these mink devils a good weapon beside their fangs, fine cut and keen as foils. Still, he must chop her out somehow. She was his meat. He claimed her.

Reynard sneezed again, and—*Snpp-p! Gr-rr-r-r-r! Snap! Gr-rr-rrr!* Snap! *Snap! Grrrrr!* Silence . . .

Wavey's mate, Vison, had somehow mysteriously taken the place of the red fox in the red dawn upon the snow (that was red in spots now, too) and with red jaws revealed by folded white upper lip—the mink badge, by the way—was grinning up at her out of a wizened, black, red eyed face, a grin to see in delirium and to try to forget about ever after. Wavey's physiognomy was bad enough, but Vison's was worse, much worse.

He was also a larger beast (some twenty-seven inches), heavier, more of a calamity on four legs, and his uniform was deep, rich chocolate, though, like his mate, he had the white upper lip that is the distinguishing mark of the mink people.

But whether Vison had seen his mate was another matter. He had smelled her; he knew that she had made the smell—a peculiar sort of gas attack, in desperation, possible to this strange clan; and he knew, therefore, that she was in trouble. Enough.

The long, low, sinuous beast, with the devil's head, the prizefighter's heart, and no soul, promptly proceeded to scent his mate out, disentangling her tail. Yet so quiet was he that he had actually—after many qualms—ascended the deadfall and was standing with his white nose—the only white part about him, for even his underparts, unlike most beasts, were scarcely lighter than his upper works, and his tail was all black—dropped and touching the back of her neck as near as he could get, before any one could have told what he was about.

Now there is nothing in having a cold nose touching one's spine, especially if it happens to be one's husband's; but the owner of this nose was a mink. Those who know the bloodthirsty breed will assure you that the ordeal may be trying; rather like having a cold revolver barrel pressed to one's temple—even if it does happen to be one's husband's.

Moreover, that particular place is the mink's bull's-eye; he slays at that vital spot; like the Spanish matador, he is a specialist in striking just there. But that was not the point. The point was that Vison's nose *stayed there.* The beast did not move, I tell you. He remained motionless, his nose dropped as nearly between the shoulders of his mate as the deadfall would let him. He remained motionless so long there that remembering some tales one had heard about the grim bloodthirstiness of the mink, the situation became fraught with suspicion.

What was he at? Drinking his wife's blood? Would the deliberate, unflurried, calculating, unemotional, soulless thing *never* move? What could he be up to there glued to the corpse?

Ah!

Of course the lynx had made a mistake. Undoubtedly the lynx had made a mistake. His only excuse was that he was a very young lynx, his tummy was very empty—and the minks were so very still. I feel sure he thought them both dead. Anyway he stalked, and dropped lightly, neatly upon them from an overarching branch above.

EVEN then Vison did not move; at least, not his arched body, only his head, and his head moved so quickly that one had scarce time to see it do so. One rather knew that it had moved, almost *à la* snake's stroke, and that his nose was now pressed against the lynx's shoulder blade, almost as it had been pressed behind his mate's neck. It was only when the lynx screamed; only when the lynx went, like a racehorse, taking Vison with him, trailing like a broken trace, that one

realized that Vison had hold of that lynx, and that the lynx was aware of the fact very painfully indeed.

Cool, calm, and collected, as if nothing at all had happened; deadly, grim, and neatly adequate as ever, Vison came back after some time, galloping his odd, sidelong gallop, undulating, as they must who are designed for hole and corner hunting, shall we call it?—with length without height on he came, I say, back to the deadfall lightly on his stumpy, sturdy paws, and ah! but it was so characteristic. He had doubled upon himself, without pause, check, or start of surprise, and was a bushy tail vanishing—gone.

The form of a man was gliding toward him upon snowshoes between the iron-hard pillars of the tree trunks. Only his snowshoes whispered. Only a raven somewhere croaked (resignedly at thought of losing the dead mink). Only a snow-bunting ("flakes", they call them, because they look like flakes) had piped sweetly. That was all and—no Vison. At least, there was a Vison—a flat wedge of a blackish cranium, watching with eyes of amazing brightness from over the snow covered top of a windfall. Neither you nor I could have seen him unless we knew, though; nor could the man; he had not seen him at all, in fact.

The business that the man had in that lugubrious place was short, if not sweet. He had come for Wavey and was delighted to find her there, for he was the person who, noticing the well trodden runway to the mink's hole on the steam bank, had set the deadfall trap. If it did not catch a mink, it might catch a sable, and so much the better. But a mink would do; besides, Wavey had really a most beautiful and unusual coat.

He patted himself upon the back, that citizen swathed to the eyes and dirty. He was proud, but—well, see here: he was a very fine trapper, that one, admittedly, but a mighty poor man, and what followed next moment proved it.

Vison, with sharp eyes fixed steadily as a snake's over the top of the windfall saw what transpired, watched the fellow lift the heavy deadfall, beheld his mate slip therefrom helplessly inert to the snow beneath, and lie there limp as a rag; heard the wolf howl dismally and lone through the arched aisles of the still silent forest, saw the man start and peer round furtively, paling visibly even under his dirt; listened to the wolf howling again, an unutterably horrible sound of misery, loneliness, hunger and veiled, intangible menace, filling as it seemed, the whole forest; howling again and again peopling the shadow with howling echoes, a wolf, half a dozen wolves, a whole pack, here, there, everywhere, near certainly—heavens! *at hand!* And the man was up a tree!

Vison screwed his head around for a priceless glimpse of the "lord of creation", clinging in a tree as any timid squirrel, and—afraid. Animals know when we fear. A wave of exultation swept over the intrepid little beast. But then he knew, what we should not have known, what the man did not know even, that there was only one wolf and that on the shore of a lake a mile away. Extraordinary what an amazing amount of noise one wolf can kick up in the still, snow bound forest when it chooses. Yet even so, without actually seeing the telltale tracks, one could hardly have believed the truth.

"On the shore of the lake a mile away."

The thought inspired by sound, and the recollection inspired by wide knowledge of a wanderer, set the mink's brain working. He had paused there the night before, had passed the wolf—circumspectly—and remembered that way out in its center the all but frozen lake had shown a dark patch, a circle of open water that some incoming spring and the movements of many wildfowl had kept open in the thick water that seemed so anxious to freeze and be still.

Burrowing into the snow utterly to avoid detection, Vison now crawled on his belly away—toward the lake. He was going to make a kill for his mate. The grim little fighter seemed to know she would not be able to hunt for herself; knew too, probably, that failing food in

that temperature, she must freeze. But the uselessness of his self-set task seemed almost pathetic.

THEN a strange thing happened. Wavey moved! I say that that she-mink, who had been caught, and by all the laws of reason should have been crushed to death utterly, long before, in a heavy deadfall—she had been there exactly twenty hours—moved! Yea, verily, but this is not to say that she walked. By no manner of means could her progress to the nearest tree trunk, and *behind it*, be called a walk. Nor could it be called a roll; and it was not a crawl.

It was a sort of ghastly compromise; much the same as that accomplished by a rabbit who, having all four legs shot succeeds, somehow—God knows how—in reaching and getting down its hole. Nor was the awful wriggle far, but far enough. It accomplished its excruciating object; it put Wavey out of sight of the hated man.

Possibly Vison's warm breath between her shoulders for so long had saved her; though whether that act on his part already described had implied love or menace, to this day none can tell.

Then the beast collapsed in a limp heap. She seemed to die all over again, and was still—ominously still.

After very long the man came down. He was in a hurry, truth to tell in a panic also. Moreover he was between the devil and the deep sea. Long night was at hand, and with it ran death by freezing if he stayed in the tree. Better uncertain wolves than certain frostbite. I think he was too panicky to marvel at the uncanny resurrection of the "dead" mink. He did not see her, that was the point, as he glanced around. Then he fled, and the rising moon and his own shadow, and not any wolves, chased him home.

Two hours later, a strange procession of two creatures might have been seen coming through the forest; strange because the first walked backward, tugging the second, who was on its back and not doing anything at all. The first was Vison. The second a full grown drake mallard or wild duck Vison had killed. But who can picture the supreme patience of that long, long stalk over the perfectly bare lake; the stealth and judgment of the final dive under water whose temperature would have stopped your heart or mine; the labor of that mile long journey homeward, going astern and by jerks most of the way, and fighting off a starving sable first, a party of ermines second, and a snowy owl third, and—*and*, I say, the sublime faith that won him through.

But that was not enough; not enough that he should drag his kill down his hole to their warm feather and hay nest; that he should have come up again and fought off—this time only after a terrible battle—the returned fox, who was literally starving.

No, none of these things was enough for Vison, the undaunted. For him alone, surely, they were not enough. He must catch hold of his mate by the scruff of the neck, much as a cat takes a kitten, and he must back with her, tugging, struggling, staggering, gasping, back, back, back somehow—she was worse than the wild duck—back in spite of all obstacles, grimly, doggedly, inch by straining inch, back to his hole and—in.

Thus he vanished, vanished our lion hearted outlaw, from the peering, prying, preying eyes of the famished wild, and who was there that dare enter in and see what happened after? Yet if they had, they would have seen Vison in his nest, curled up, bushy tail and all, closely around or against the body of his mate, bringing her back with his warmth, though he knew not, slowly, painfully, to life, till at last, after hours, she moved feebly, shifted slightly . . . She had seized the wild duck! Victory was Vison's. Grit had won the fight. Doggedness had done it!

Days, nay, weeks, must pass before that poor crushed female animal body could hunt again, but what matter? Vison was a man and a half—he could hunt for two.

Falling Clear

By LLOYD S. GRAHAM

IT ALL HAPPENED as the result of an argument—the age-old argument that when a person falls free through space he loses control of his senses and passes into unconsciousness. Harold L. Whitby, in April, 1928, was stationed at the Pensacola Naval Air Station with the rank of aviation machinist's mate, 2nd class. He was in charge of the parachute detail and when one day a group of commissioned officers, new to the station, happened in the parachute department to declare that a falling person would soon pass out, Whitby took issue with them.

Whitby, in a way, had his nerve to start arguing with the gold braid on any question, even if he was recognized as an expert who had trained under that parachute veteran, Chief Petty Officer Alva S. Starr at the Lakehurst Naval Air Station.

The argument looked as though it was going to become a draw with Whitby firm in his convictions and his utterances, and the officers just as sure on their side but with less facts to back up their argument. Others in the parachute detail supported Whitby.

Whitby declared uncompromisingly that falling free through the air, regardless of speed, had practically no effect upon consciousness. He had made up to that time about sixteen jumps for training purposes and some of them had been somewhat delayed—sufficiently so that he knew what he was talking about. Still the officers were unconvinced, and became somewhat nettled by his persistence.

Under the circumstances the logical thing for Whitby to do was to offer to make a demonstration, and two mates in the parachute department enthusiastically offered to back him up also by making long free falls before pulling the rip cords.

The demonstration was set for April 4. All of the jumps were made from 5,100 feet altitude or better. The first man to go up fell free a distance of 2,700 feet before he pulled the rip cord. The second man dropped as straight as a plummet for 3,300 feet before pulling the magic ring.

Then came Whitby's turn, to complete the show. The entire station—all those who could be spared from duty—gold braid and gobs, were out to see the show. Whitby went up with Chief Aviation Pilot E. E. Dildine at the controls of the ship. He wore what is known in the Services as a training parachute outfit. This consists of a pack containing a silk chute 28 feet in diameter on the back, and another 24 feet in diameter on the chest. Two packs are now required in the Services and by the Department of Commerce for all jumpers in training and doing exhibition jumps. Whitby had no idea of cracking the emergency pack except to decrease the rate of descent more rapidly in case it seemed that he was to make an unusually "hot landing". Incidentally when a jumper speaks of "cracking" a chute he does not mean splitting the silk, but that he opens the pack by pulling the rip cord. A hot landing is a fast one.

Whitby watched Dildine spiral the ship up to 5,100 feet. He figured on falling clear about 4,000 feet and depending upon the use of a chute for 1,100 feet to slow up his descent to a safe landing. He would thereby better the record just made by his two mates and knock for a row of

loops all existing records for free falls deliberately made. Specifically he expected to shut the mouths of all opinionated gold braiders on this subject for all time.

As for fear of the experiment, Whitby had none. He knew what the chute would do. He knew that it was built to withstand the strain of opening on a 400-pound body falling at the rate of 200 miles per hour. He weighed but 170 pounds and he doubted very much if he would fall at any time at the rate of 200 miles per hour. Furthermore, he had heard of one or two cases in which men had been knocked unconscious in leaving wrecked airplanes high in the air, had fallen several thousand feet, regained consciousness a distance from the ground sufficiently to pull the rip cord and make a safe landing.

So, at 5,100 feet, Dildine leveled off and Whitby climbed out on the wing ready to drop as soon as the best point for landing seemed to have been reached. Deliberately, with no more ado than you or I would make in stepping off a street curb, Whitby stepped off the trailing edge of that wing into 5,100 feet of free air.

Whitby knew enough about the air to be able to judge distances from the ground by merely looking at it. Any airman of experience can do that. When his eyes told him he was 1,000 feet from the ground, he would pull, and not until then. Down he hurtled, sometimes somersaulting, sometimes spiraling, sometimes in a dive, at others feet first, and then spins. Those spins did funny things to his stomach and he would immediately correct the condition and come out of them by throwing out an arm or a leg.

When he had fallen nearly 3,500 feet Whitby went into what he calls a slow turn.

"Fair enough," he thought, "my head will come up in a second and when it does, I will pull the rip cord."

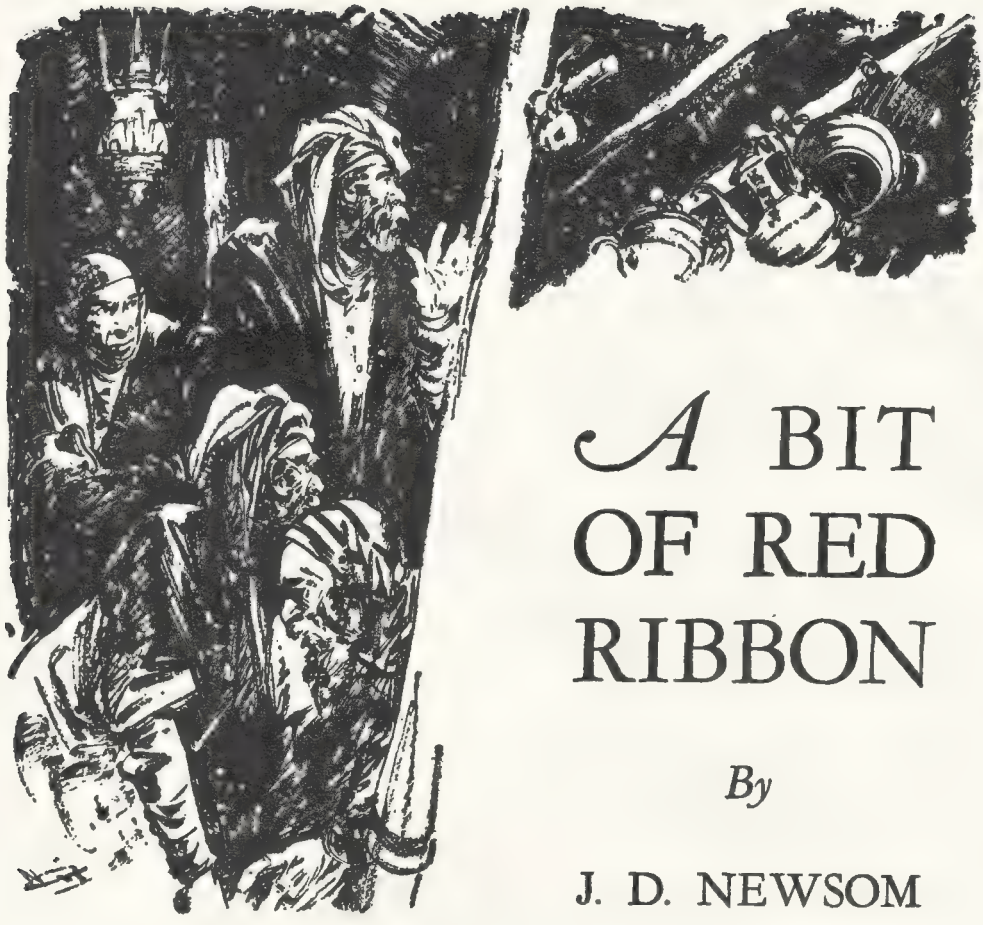
He knew that the strain would be tremendous and he wanted to pull when his body was upright—head up—so that the jerk of the opening chute would be evenly and naturally distributed. If he pulled with his head toward the earth, the jerk might snap his head and shoulders dangerously.

But the turn was slower than he had expected. When his head finally came up he saw that he had fallen nearly 1,000 feet during the turn and was uncomfortably close to the ground. Anyhow, he was in an ideal position and he pulled. The chute opened instantly with a report like a cannon. It seemed to him that he was shot up into the canopy by the impact of its opening. He was so close to it for an instant that he could have reached up and touched the peak of the silk with his hand.

As he dropped into normal parachuting position, Whitby knew he was in for a hot landing and thought of pulling the rip cord of the emergency chute. But the ground was rushing at him and he had no time. All he could do was to prepare himself for a hot landing, like a baseball player sliding on side and back to base. He came in that way.

That was a thrill that the men and women at Pensacola that day will not soon forget. They thought he was done for when he reached within 1,000 feet of the earth and was still falling free. When the chute opened, those who were still looking—several had turned their faces away and the surgeon had sent a couple of orderlies on the run to the hospital for the "wire basket"—declare that he was not more than 200 feet from the ground. Whitby laughingly declares that he was at least 700 feet and that he would not have been so close if the turn had not been so slow in bringing his head up where he wanted it.

Was he hurt? No. But they sent him to the hospital for the night and gave him a thorough physical examination the next morning. A trouble hunter, amazed and unbelieving, that surgeon was. Oh, yes; so terrific and so well distributed had been the force of opening that the broad webbing of the parachute harness worn over Whitby's ordinary clothing, left a black and blue pattern upon his flesh at all points of contact.



A BIT OF RED RIBBON

By

J. D. NEWSOM

MRS. FORBES-SMITH said: "Wait for me here, dear. I shan't be a minute."

One hour and a half later Mr. Forbes-Smith was still standing on the corner of the Rue Daunou and the Rue de la Paix, waiting, patiently waiting.

He was used to it. Mrs. Forbes-Smith had kept him waiting fifteen months before she condescended to marry him. She had been late at the church on their wedding day. Since then, for the past eight years, he had been marking time outside department stores, modistes and dress making establishments all the world over. He had waited on Chestnut Street in Philadelphia, the Bund in Shanghai, the Place Royale in Brussels, and a hundred other places, for Mrs. Forbes-Smith was an indefatigable traveler and an enthusiastic bargain hunter. She meant well.

She was very sweet and kind and reasonable, but she had no idea of time. None whatsoever. Remonstrations were useless. They merely wounded her feelings. Her feelings were very easily hurt. She simply couldn't stand criticism. At the slightest hint of reproach she became convinced that her husband no longer loved her and that she had thrown away her youth on a selfish brute who did not understand her.

Long ago the last flicker of independence in Mr. Forbes-Smith's heart had been overlaid and smothered. He was

A Novelette of the Foreign Legion

resigned to his fate and he looked it: a thin, small boned man of thirty-two, neatly dressed in a dark gray suit with pearl gray spats and a gray-and-blue tie. A black derby was set squarely on his head, tilted neither to the right nor to the left. He had regular features, a pale complexion and a rather weak mouth. His one distinguishing characteristic was a small mole on the left side of his nose, which his wife intended to see about just as soon as they went home that Fall. She wanted to have it burned out with an electric needle.

What Mr. Forbes-Smith thought about this projected operation on his nose was of no importance . . .

But that morning it was raining, and a raw, wet wind was whistling down the Rue de la Paix.

For an hour and a half Forbes-Smith stood by the curb, staring vaguely at the traffic while the drops off his umbrella dribbled down his neck. He was so gray and neat and inconspicuous that not even the guides who ply their dubious trade in that part of Paris were aware of his existence.

At the end of those ninety minutes, however, a strange thought leaped unbidden into his mind.

"Confound it!" he said to himself. "I'm sick of this. This is just a little too much. I've got a good mind not to wait any longer!"

And his heart beat like a trip hammer

against his ribs. Such a thought had not occurred to him in years. It was most upsetting. He tried to dismiss it, but it came back more insistently than ever, filling him with dull, resentful anger. He had given up everything to wait for Lucy, his work and his friends. There had been a time when he had been keenly interested in bacteriology, but he hadn't been inside a laboratory for months, for Lucy did not like him to "potter about" with dangerous microbes.

"I am catching cold," he grumbled beneath his breath. "My feet are soaking wet. I'll be laid up with grippe as I was in Florence. I'm a fool to wait."

He glared helplessly at the doorway to the dressmaking establishment where his wife had disappeared. A commissionaire in a plum colored livery, bearing a vast red umbrella, mounted guard on the threshold. Forbes-Smith thought he detected a look of contempt on the man's face. Uneasily, he shifted his position a few steps nearer to the corner, and as he glanced up the Rue Daunou a sign caught his eye. It read, in large, gilded letters, Fred's American Bar.

"What I need," thought Forbes-Smith, "is a—is a cup of something hot. A cup of good strong coffee. I've been standing here one hour and a half in the pouring rain."

He stared at the bar. It had swing doors of a type no longer in vogue in the United States. Another sign was pasted in the window.

TRY OUR
HOT DOGS *avec* MUSTARD . . . . FCS. 10
GENUINE MUNICH BEER 5
BUCKWHEAT CAKES 10
"HOME WAS NEVER LIKE THIS"

A passing automobile splashed mud on his trouserlegs. The wind driven rain pattered about him. He was miserably damp.

"I'll do it," he muttered, gripping his umbrella so tightly that his knuckles turned white. "In one more minute, if she is not here, I shall go."

The minute sped by. He shuffled closer and closer to the curb. Still no sign of Lucy. When the traffic stopped the crowd swept him across the street.

He felt like a criminal. He was about to leave his wife in the lurch while he went into a saloon. It was a filthy, contemptible thing to do. But he could not help it. Irresistibly he was drawn toward the swing door. People trod on his heels, urging him along. The door swung gently to and fro on well oiled hinges.

He cast one last, despairing glance over his shoulder, hoping against hope that he might be vouchsafed a glimpse of his wife, hurrying through the crowd to save him from himself. His hopes were doomed to disappointment; there was no sign of Mrs. Forbes-Smith. He felt disappointed and relieved and tremendously excited.

"That settles it," he said bitterly. "She can't make a monkey out of me all the time. I'm entitled to a certain amount of consideration. Let her find her own way back to the hotel—it'll be a lesson to her. And anyway," he added to soothe his troubled conscience, "I shan't be more than five minutes."

Nevertheless, he was still standing on the threshold, pushing tentatively at the swing door, when somebody lumbered against him and a voice said in his ear:

"Snap out of it, buddy! Which way—in or out?"

Mr. Forbes-Smith winced. Never before in his thirty-two years of life had he been called buddy. His full name was John Jefferson Forbes-Smith. Any one more unlike a buddy would be difficult to imagine.

HE GAPED at the speaker—a young chap wearing a rather gaudy sports suit. The brim of a battered felt hat was drawn down over his eyes. He had a lean, hard face and a breezy, friendly manner.

"Er—in," said Forbes-Smith. "In, of course."

"Then get in," urged the young man,

peering uneasily up and down the street. "It's a dark and stormy night, stranger. Fling open the tavern door!"

As a matter of fact it was only a quarter past eleven in the morning. Forbes-Smith perceived that the man was trying to be humorous. He found it very pleasant to be kidded by a fellow American in the streets of Paris. Mrs. Forbes-Smith did not like to talk to people she did not know. She said it was not safe. The only persons she associated with when traveling were middle aged ladies who could be trusted not to vamp her John. Men she despised and distrusted.

But there was nothing wrong with this young fellow. He was merely being sociable. Forbes-Smith tried to think of something to say. He was still turning the matter over in his mind, however, when the young man, who was evidently in a hurry, took him by the arm and shoved him past the swing door.

He found himself in a warm, cheerful room quite unlike the bleak tea rooms where he was in the habit of eating. The soft glow of concealed lights fell on polished woodwork and gleaming mirrors. To the left stood a long bar with a brass rail. At the back of the room there was a row of leather arm chairs and small tables with marble tops. A thick carpet muffled the sound of his footsteps.

At that hour of the morning the place was empty. The young man went straight to the bar, placed one foot on the brass rail and ordered a whisky-sour.

Nothing would have pleased Forbes-Smith better than to plant his own foot on that brass rail—but he could not bring himself to do so. Eight-year-old habits can not be shattered in half as many minutes.

He went and sat down at the back of the room. The armchair was deep and comfortable. Only then did he realize that his legs ached and that he had a pain in the small of his back. He wasn't at all strong. He suffered from cardiac debility, chronic anemia and pulmonary disorders. At home his wife made him haunt specialists' clinics, but abroad she didn't seem to care what became of him. The more he thought about it the more resentful he grew.

"Hey!" the barman called out. "Mister, what's yours?"

"Oh, mine?" repeated Forbes-Smith, doing his best to speak in a matter-of-fact tone. "Why, I'd like a cup of coffee, please. I am in somewhat of a hurry."

The barman, no doubt, was used to such eccentric behavior. He betrayed no emotion, but the young man in the sports suit wheeled around as though he had been stung by a bee. He gave Forbes-Smith a quick, sharp look, and the corners of his mouth twitched.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed, coming down the room, holding his glass in his hand. "You don't want coffee, buddy. You're in Paris, now—have a real drink. Have a whisky-sour. You're soaking wet."

"I am wet," began Forbes-Smith, "but—"

But he simply could not tell this man that Mrs. Forbes-Smith had a violent prejudice against alcoholic stimulants. She loathed the smell of whisky and always swore that her heart would break if ever her husband touched a single drop.

While he was hemming and hawing the young fellow took control of the situation.

"Can that coffee," he told the bartender. "Make it two more whisky-sours."

A sense of panic crept over Forbes-Smith. He couldn't argue with this masterful stranger. Indeed, he didn't want to argue. Temptation beset him. He wanted that drink in the very worst way, not only because he was cold and tired, but because he wanted to assert his independence. It was good to be sitting in a saloon, among his peers, wallowing in the depths of a leather armchair, instead of being cooped up in some hygienic tea room with a crowd of cackling females.

"By Jove!" he thought, throwing aside

all restraint. "I'll do it. Just one sip. I don't care whether she smells it on my breath or not!"

And that was the beginning of his downfall.

His memory of subsequent events was always extremely hazy. With the first drink all doubts and anxieties were wiped clean out of his mind. Nor was he able to remember how or when he finished the first whisky-sour and started on the second. His glass was never empty and his thirst was unquenchable.

He could not have asked for a better, more cheerful companion than dear old Jimmy Brown, as the young chap was called. Jimmy was a fine fellow, full of understanding and wisdom.

"So your name's Smith," he remarked along toward the end of the fourth whisky-sour. "That's quite a coincidence."

"Forbsh-Shmish," corrected the owner of the double barreled name. "Juz plain Shmish's too common. M'wife shez sho. My tongue's twishting but I don' shee—see the coincidence."

"You wouldn't," Brown grinned; he appeared to have two faces instead of one like ordinary people. "It doesn't matter, buddy. We're sitting pretty. Tell me some more about this dame of yours."

FORBES-SMITH unburdened his soul. It was really pathetic. As he talked he found he really did not love his wife at all, and the discovery made him weep. He held his head between his hands and sobbed because he was ashamed of himself.

"I'm no good," he moaned.

"We'll change all that," Brown promised. "Leave it to me. We'll do something astounding before we're through."

Forbes-Smith's conscience gave one final flicker before it was snuffed out by the whisky fumes.

"I must go," he declared. "I've been here more'n five minutes. She'll have every policeman in Paris looking for me."

"Let her wait." Brown laughed. "It'll do her good. Let *her* worry."

"'S'right!" agreed Forbes-Smith, hitting the table with his clenched fist. "'S'right! Let her worry! I'm going to live my own life. Gimme liberty or gimme death!"

Later on while he was trying to sing "'Way down upon the Swanee River," an altercation broke out between Brown and the bartender. He was still singing when he was thrown through the swing doors into the street. Brown picked him up. They rode around in a taxi for awhile. The motion made him deathly sick. Somewhere along the way they had more drinks, which made him feel worse. So Brown took him for a long walk. He felt cold and miserable; his legs wobbled unsteadily. He would have been glad to die. It was dusk. Rain fell in sheets, slashing his face. He wanted to stop while he tried to remember where he had left his umbrella, but Brown, who appeared to be preoccupied, dragged him on and on down dismal streets flanked by mean houses and sagging fences.

They came to an empty lot full of tin cans and thistles. In the distance a gas lamp threw flickering lights on the leprous wall of a warehouse. The desolation of his surroundings filled Forbes-Smith with a nameless dread.

"Look here," he gulped. "This has gone far enough, Jimmy. I must go back—"

Jimmy gripped him by the throat.

"Had enough, have you?" he said in a most unpleasant voice. "Fine! This ought to hold you for awhile."

Something hard crashed against Forbes-Smith's nose. Though the sky was overcast a multitude of bright stars whirled crazily past his blurred eyes. A salty taste of blood welled up in his mouth.

He was too bewildered to think coherently. Jimmy—his friend Jimmy—was beating him up. It didn't make sense. He couldn't shout or yell for Brown had a strangle hold on his collar. And then, very deliberately, Brown struck him again on the point of the jaw.

He saw the fist coming at him—a dark lump which grew larger and larger and

larger. His head seemed to burst wide open beneath the impact.

The next thing he knew he was lying on the flat of his back staring up at a shaft of intolerably bright light. He groaned and raised one arm to shield his eyes. For a moment he thought he was in bed and that the light had been turned on by his wife who was in the habit of reading until what she referred to as "all hours of the night." But the illusion was short-lived. Rain does not fall, as a rule, through the ceiling of hotel bedrooms. He was out-of-doors, sprawling on a bed of weeds, old sardine boxes and mud.

His clothes were wringing wet. When he moved a thread of icy cold water trickled down his neck. He sneezed violently.

"*Alors, ça va mieux?*" inquired one of the sinister figures looming above him. "How goes it, my old one?"

"O God!" moaned Forbes-Smith. "Where am I?"

He spoke with difficulty for his lower jaw was very sore.

"A foreigner," commented one of the men, "and drunk. They are always drunk. He has a breath like a sewer, the specimen of a camel!" He caught Forbes-Smith by the shoulder and yanked him up into a sitting position. "What is it you do here?" he demanded gruffly. "It is lucky for you we heard your groans as we went by, otherwise of a certainty you would have been drowned out before morning."

Sitting up had a disastrous effect upon Forbes-Smith. His brain rocked and reeled. Beads of cold sweat mingled with the rain on his forehead. A wave of nausea swept over him. He did not have enough experience to realize that he was suffering from a vulgar hangover. He thought his last moment had arrived.

And suddenly he remembered his wife. He had visions of Mrs. Forbes-Smith mobilizing the entire Paris police force to hunt for him. These two men were policemen. He could see their silver buttons and the patent leather brims of their caps.

"This is terrible," said the still, small voice of his conscience. "This is simply awful. I'll never be able to live this down. I am disgraced."

The *sergents-de-ville* were not sympathetic.

"The pig," said one of them. "Look at his visage. He has been in a fight, that is obvious."

A ray of hope dawned upon Forbes-Smith.

"Yes," he gulped. "A fight. I was attacked—"

"If it were not for these foreigners," grumbled the policeman, "this would be a quiet district. They get drunk and they fight, and we have to waste our time cleaning up the messes they make." He jerked Forbes-Smith to his feet. "*Allez!* You can tell your troubles to the *commissaire.* Get a move on!"

But Forbes-Smith's legs refused to carry him. They bent beneath him like wet strings. He endeavored to apologize.

"It is the weakness. I am a respectable person—"

"Respectable! You are drunk," jeered the policeman. "Filthily drunk, and don't deny it. Let's get in out of the wet."

They caught hold of him beneath the armpits and marched him along at a brisk pace through the rain. His feet, over which he had no control, dragged along behind him, much to the amusement of several small boys who appeared out of nowhere to escort him to the police station. He hung his head in shame.

THE POLICE station was a dingy, gaslit room smelling of feet, damp clothes and stale tobacco smoke. Forbes-Smith was relieved to find that his wife was not on hand to greet him. He shuddered at the prospect of that interview. He could almost hear her say—

"John, you have broken my heart."

Three uniformed men lounged on a bench against the whitewashed wall. They were playing cards. They did not look up when the prisoner was brought in. Another man, a sergeant, sat at a desk, cleaning his finger nails with a huge jack-knife. He had a heavy mustache which completely concealed his mouth, and a large nose covered with a network of red veins.

He made no comment while the two policemen made their report. It was terse and matter-of-fact. They had found the prisoner at ten minutes past nineteen o'clock on the edge of a vacant lot in the Rue Montaut. He was drunk and showed signs of having been in a brawl. He said he had been attacked.

The sergeant put down his knife, yawned and scratched the back of his neck. He looked bored. He was bored.

"Let's see your papers," he grunted.

"I am not intoxicated," protested Forbes-Smith. "The dizziness I am suffering from is attributable to—"

"*Papers!*" The one word shot like a bullet through the mustache.

Forbes-Smith's hand went to the breast pocket where he kept his passport and his wallet. It was then that he made a discovery so startling that it wrenched a sharp exclamation of dismay from his lips. There was something altogether wrong with his clothes. Instead of his gray coat and trousers, he was wearing a tweed sports suit and brown brogues. Instead of his derby the policeman had crammed a felt hat down over his ears. A nightmare sense of helplessness numbed his mind.

He stared open mouthed at the sergeant, and his eyes threatened to pop out of his head. Not a word of French could he remember.

He tittered nervously, not because his predicament struck him as being funny, but because he did not know what else to do.

"It's Brown's suit," he stammered. "I'm wearing his suit . . . The garments of my friend," he added in halting French. "I am at a loss for an explanation."

The sergeant picked up the jack-knife and went to work digging out his left hand thumb nail.

"Search him." He yawned.

The policeman made a quick, neat job of it. They brought some strange things to light; an automatic, two clips of cartridges, a pair of loaded dice, a dollar watch with a broken main spring, and a flat, limp, dog eared pocketbook.

"Money?" inquired the sergeant.

"Not a sou. That's the lot," answered the policeman, tossing the wallet on to the desk. "Maybe you'll find a couple of million francs in that."

"I had three thousand francs in notes and a checkbook," protested Forbes-Smith. "They must have been stolen."

"*Ferme ça!*" snapped the sergeant. "Shut up! That gun is enough to send you to Fresne for six months, you scoundrel. You're a good catch."

"The gun is not mine—"

"Of course not. Tell that to the judge at the assizes. Now let's see what's in here."

He flipped open the wallet with the point of his knife and scooped out the papers it contained.

"I am ready to bet you have not got an identity card," he began. "Your kind never has."

"I am stopping with my wife at the Pension Choiseul," exclaimed Forbes-Smith. "My identity card was in my wallet."

But the sergeant was not listening. He sat bolt upright, scowling at the papers he held in his hand. He gave a loud snort.

"Enough! What's the use of lying? All these fantastic stories are not going to get you anywhere. You're caught. Make the best of it. Is Smith your name, or isn't it?"

"Smith? Yes, of course. Forbes-Smith. My wife—"

"*Zut!* I am not concerned with your wife. What is your baptismal name—the name you gave when you enlisted?"

"John. If my wife—"

"John Smith. There you are! Everything is in order. Now don't try to tell me these are not your papers. I'm neither drunk nor crazy. It's perfectly plain. Here's the railroad warrant. You were to catch the twenty minutes past twenty-two o'clock train on the seventeenth. That was yesterday. I suppose you have been too drunk to know what you were doing. That's your funeral, *mon bon*. You might as well make the best of it. I'll telephone through to the Bureau Militaire and let 'em know you've turned up."

By that time Forbes-Smith was cold sober.

"I don't know what you are talking about," he declared. "My name is Forbes-Smith, with a hyphen. I have made no plans to catch any train. My wife and I became separated this morning. This man, Brown, whose clothes I am wearing—"

A look of intense disgust suffused the sergeant's face.

"You poor stupid fool," he cried. "Sober up! Come back to earth! You deceive no one with your imaginings. Have you the audacity to stand there in front of me and assert that these are not your papers?"

FOR A MOMENT Forbes-Smith was almost tempted to doubt his own sanity. He felt himself encompassed by malignant forces which threatened to have disastrous consequences. He *was* Forbes-Smith—John Jefferson Forbes-Smith—thirty-two years of age, married, a resident of Overbrook, Pennsylvania, a blameless, upright, eminently moral person with a very definite social status and well defined responsibilities. And yet this ham faced police sergeant was trying to wish upon him a shadowy personality which was not his own—the personality of a certain John Smith who, apparently, had assumed certain engagements connected with railroad warrants, time tables and enlistments.

To make matters worse the documents relating to John Smith came out of Jimmy Brown's pocketbook.

Forbes-Smith's mind tied itself up in a tight knot. He spoke slowly, doing his best to enunciate each French word he used as clearly as possible so that all misunderstandings might be avoided.

"Monsieur," he said, "I can explain everything. Suffer me to begin at the beginning. I am the victim of circumstances—"

"You are," agreed the sergeant. "But that is none of my business. Answer my question; are these papers yours?"

Forbes-Smith took a deep breath. He looked the sergeant straight in the eye.

"No," he declared. "Those papers do not belong to me. I have never seen them before. That wallet is not my wallet; these are not my clothes."

The sergeant shrugged his shoulders. He burst out laughing. All the cops, taking their cue from their chief, laughed also. They had listened to many an alibi, but never to such a fantastic tissue of lies as this bedraggled creature was attempting to make them swallow.

"My boy," the sergeant said paternally, "you'll have to think up a far better story than that if you want to deceive me. I am not an infant in arms and I ceased to believe fairy tales long ago."

"I give you my most solemn word of honor," protested Forbes-Smith. "I am speaking the truth. At this very minute my wife must be searching for me everywhere. I stepped into a café for a drink and—"

His words brought down the house. The policeman smacked their thighs and held their aching sides while tears of pure joy streamed down their cheeks. One of them came over and clouted the prisoner between the shoulder blades.

"*Sacré bonhomme!*" he wheezed. "You ought to be on the stage. Your wife's looking for you—and you're found lying in the Rue Montaut with a gun in your pocket! *Bon dieu*, you're the funniest fellow we've had in here since I have been on the beat!"

Forbes-Smith's self-control was beginning to wear very thin.

"I tell you you are making a mistake!" he yelled. "I will not be treated in this odious fashion. I must get back to the Pension Choiseul."

"And you'll shut up unless you want to be locked in a cell," retorted the sergeant, bringing down his fist on the desk with a bang. "Shut your trap! You are John Smith. You have admitted as much."

"Forbes-Smith."

"Tack on fifty names if you like. You're Smith. That's settled. Now, do you deny that on the morning of the seventeenth of September you went to the recruiting office in the Rue des Dominicains and enlisted in the ranks of the French Foreign Legion?"

"I deny it!" shouted Forbes-Smith. "Positively. Yesterday morning we went to see the Renoirs at the Louvre museum. Why, in God's name, should I have joined the French Foreign Legion?"

"You know more about that than I do. Furthermore, do you deny that you were issued with this third-class railroad warrant and instructed to take the twenty-minutes past twenty-two o'clock train for Marseilles at the P.L.M. station?

"Of course I do!" Forbes-Smith's voice was high pitched and quavering. "I am not your John Smith, I keep telling you. Can't you understand plain French? Or is it that you are deaf?"

The sergeant's mustache bristled ominously.

"You're an insolent swine, aren't you?" he rasped. "They'll soon cure you of that when they get you on the parade ground at Sidi-bel-Abbès. One more thing—what's your nationality?"

"I am a citizen of the United States of America. And I warn you that unless you consent to listen to me my consul will—"

"Did your consul tell you you could carry a gun around in your pocket?" sneered the sergeant. "So far as I am concerned the matter is closed. It says right here in black and white that John Smith is an American. The evidence tallies perfectly. There is not a single flaw. You are absent without leave."

Forbes-Smith was tempted to tear his hair out by the roots. An inkling of the truth dawned upon him. Brown, for reasons of his own, must have joined this French Foreign Legion under an assumed name—the most commonplace name he could think of. At the last minute he had probably changed his mind and had made use of Forbes-Smith as a scapegoat while he cleared out of the country.

And all the while Mrs. Forbes-Smith was no doubt watching and waiting and wondering what had become of her wayward husband. She was not crying—of that he was positive. She would be doing all the proper things—calling up hospitals, morgues, embassies and police headquarters. He quailed at the thought of the things she was going to say when, eventually, they came face to face. He could never live down the scandal. The sort of people he associated with would not appreciate his escapade.

"May I use your telephone?" he pleaded. "Let me call up the Pension Choiseul. I can prove to you that you are wrong."

The sergeant snatched up the receiver and shouted a number.

"I'll do all the telephoning around here," he assured Forbes-Smith while he was waiting for the call to be put through. "You are not going to waste any more of my time, you specimen of an ape. I am ringing up the Bureau Militaire. We'll straighten this matter out at once."

Forbes-Smith listened to the ensuing telephone conversation as a condemned man might listen to the reading of his death sentence.

"I want the voluntary enlistment office," snapped the sergeant. "This is the *commissariat* of the Rue Pellard." And then, seconds later, "*Allo!* The recruiting sergeant? I have here a man of the most crapulous, a veritable bandit of a foreigner, who was picked up dead drunk by my men. The papers are made out to the name of John Smith. . . . You remember him? *Bon.* Yes, I saw he

ought to have gone yesterday. . . . Yes, I know. They are unreliable cattle. . . . *Allo!* He says that he is not John Smith. Oh, an absurd story. Nothing vital. . . . What does he look like? Medium height, thin, face oval, nose straight, eyes brown, hair brown? He is all battered up just at present. Been in a fight. . . . What's that? Clothes? A loud affair such as one sees on the tourists in the autocars—it is yellow and green . . . . You remember the suit? Ha-ha! Yes, all right. . . . Ha-ha! Well, *mon brave*, what is to be done? Tonight? Yes, there is plenty of time. You'll send around for him? I suggest a strong armed and vigorous guard. This fellow is dangerous. He had a gun in his pocket. Yes, a loaded automatic pistol. A report? Certainly! Delighted! Yes, he ought to be punished. Leave it to the Legion, eh? Ha-ha! Well, *au revoir*, monsieur; *au plaisir!*"

He hung up the receiver and swiveled around toward Forbes-Smith.

"*Et voilà!*" he exclaimed, rubbing his hands together. "That is the way we do things over here, my boy. An admirable invention, the telephone. A French invention, I would have you know. Such speed, eh? Such efficiency! So you see you did not fool us after all. You'll go down to Marseilles under escort. You can sit down on the bench if you like while you're waiting."

Forbes-Smith opened his mouth, but no sound came forth. He glanced wildly about the room. Behind him the street door stood ajar. The two policemen who had brought him in were no longer holding his arms. Blindly, he hurled himself toward the door. His hand was on the knob when of one accord five large policemen fell on top of him. He was smothered beneath an avalanche of knees, fists and muddy boots. The breath was knocked out of his lungs. Even so he fought with the fury of despair, biting, clawing and gouging, until some one cracked him over the skull with a nice, white truncheon.

After that they had no trouble carting him into a cell.

"And do you know what is going to happen to you if this keeps up?" said the sergeant before he locked the door. "You'll be breaking stones on the roads of Morocco for the next ten years, you ungrateful swine!"

"SQUAD!" brayed the drill sergeant. "'Tention! As you were! 'Tention! Look to your front, you rat faced specimen of a spittle skin! Yes, it is to you that I speak—you, Smith, hunk of putrescent tripe that you are! Stand steady!"

Soldier of the Second Class (Forbes) Smith J., looked at the red faced noncom with the eyes of a whipped dog. Sweat dribbled down his dust caked cheeks into his beard. He had not shaved for five weeks. His whiskers were stiff with dirt, and his nose, roasted by the African sun, was red and swollen and peeling.

Every muscle in his body ached abominably. His arms and legs were shaken by spasmodic twitchings which were altogether beyond his control. When his hand shook, the rifle he was holding shook also, only ten times more, and the gleaming, needle-like bayonet clamped on the gun muzzle wobbled all over the place.

He knew positively that within the next few seconds he was going to collapse. It was more than he could endure. Not only was the rifle breaking his arms, but sixty pounds of kit were strapped on to his back. Sixty pounds—full marching order—shoes, shirts, underwear, cooking pots, half a tent, tent pegs—a monstrous great weight which was damaging his spine beyond repair and cutting raw, red grooves in his shoulders. His feet, encased in clumsy, hobnailed boots, were sore and blistered and bleeding.

It was not quite five o'clock in the morning. A hard, steely gray light was sifting over the flat rooftops of Sidi-bel-Abbès. In that light the drill sergeant's face had the stiffness and inflexibility of cast iron. A tall, bony man, he held himself as straight as a ramrod with his fists tightly clenched at his sides. Every time he barked an order he gave his arms a

downward jerk as though he were trying to pack into his words the force of a physical blow.

The awkward squad was having a rough passage. The men had been bundled out of bed in the pitch-dark night, and after swallowing a mug of scalding hot dishwater—optimistically referred to as coffee—they had marched out on to the drill ground at four o'clock.

Sergeant Braeling, according to his custom, had been making the recruits sweat blood.

"Now then," he went on, "listen carefully, you flat footed, knock kneed cretins. Article 4, Paragraph 121, of the 'Manual of Infantry Maneuvers' says, 'The bayonet is the supreme weapon of the infantryman. It plays the decisive rôle in the final assault which must always be the culmination of an attack. It—' the bayonet, you baboons!— 'it, and it alone, permits one to put the adversary definitely out of action.'

"Smith—" he thrust out his jaw as he spoke— "are you listening to me? Close your mouth! You can catch flies some other time when you are not on parade. Do you understand what I am telling you, or is your brain a mere lump of mush?"

Forbes-Smith was nearly deafened by the blast of that voice. It was so loud, however, and he was so exhausted, that he had only the haziest idea what it was all about. His mind was elsewhere—far, far away. Nevertheless, automatically, at the sound of his name he tried to appear alert.

"Yes, *mon Sergent*," he croaked. "I understand, *mon Sergent*."

Since he had been at the depot, if he had learned nothing else, he had at least learned to say "*mon Sergent*" in his sleep.

"In that case," rasped Braeling, "repeat Article 4, Paragraph 121. Come on—let's have it. 'The bayonet—' "

"The bayonet it—er—the bayonet is—ah—the bayonet is the supreme utensil of the soldier," parroted the miserable Legionnaire.

But he spoke without conviction, in a weary, sing-song voice which drove Braeling frantic. He was used to handling men—rough, hard headed, cantankerous lads who were worth whipping into shape. They might be full of cheap booze, they might be the worst scoundrels on the face of God's green earth, but most of then had guts, grit, sand—a rock bottom of manhood. A few months of clean living and rigid discipline worked wonders with such men. Smith, however, didn't fit in. He was the most spineless, wretched creature Braeling had ever met. Soft, flabby and weak, he seemed to be in a trance like a sleep walker.

Ever since he had reached the depot he had made a nuisance of himself. He didn't know how to keep himself clean, nor how to wash clothes, nor how to polish a pair of boots. During the first few days he had wandered about, pestering everybody with a wild yarn to the effect that he wasn't Smith but Forbes-Smith, and that he had not joined the Legion at all.

He was quickly cured of that little trick.

"In the Legion," the sergeant-major had told him, "you can be as nutty as you like—unofficially. We don't mind a little thing like delusional insanity. But you want to keep it private. Hush it up, *mon petit*. Bear this in mind: For the next five years you are No. 86,551, Legionnaire, Smith, J. Just tell yourself that the other fellow Forbes is dead. He died when you enlisted. See what I mean?"

"No," said the recruit. "I do not see what you mean, for I *am* Forbes-Smith. It is a ghastly mistake."

"Ten days cells," said the sergeant-major. "Every time you say 'Forbes' I'll say 'ten days solitary confinement.' If that does not exorcise this Forbes nothing will."

FOR THE NEXT ten days Smith existed on a bread-and-water diet in a black, stinking hole crawling with vermin which feasted heartily on his tender hide. Once was enough. There was no more mention of Forbes.

Apart from this one change there was no sign of improvement. He was just as diffident as ever, just as polite, just as stupid. All the time he seemed to be looking off into space, waiting breathlessly for something to happen, listening to strange voices which spoke to him alone.

It was enough to make a perfectly good drill sergeant froth at the mouth.

Braeling boiled over. What he said during the next few minutes may not be repeated. He dealt with the recruit's pedigree, morals and peculiar personal habits. It was a splendid piece of impromptu vituperation. When he paused for breath the entire squad, with Smith's exception, was grinning from ear to ear.

"Now then, let's get back to business," Braeling summed up. "Squad, 'tention! At the order *'Pas de charge—marche!'* place the rifle in front of the body, the bayonet held high; the right hand on the stock and in front of the hip; the left hand at the height of the left breast . . . Squad: *Pas de charge!*"

The words strangled in his throat.

Smith had not moved. He was swaying drunkenly on his feet. His face was chalk-white and his eyes were glassy. All at once he let go his rifle and placed both hands over his heart. It was behaving in a most alarming manner, bumping erratically against his ribs one moment, stopping dead the next.

"What's the matter with you now?" roared Braeling, bearing down upon the tottering Legionnaire.

"My heart," gulped Forbes-Smith. "Always weak—strained. I'm g-going to have an attack."

In private life his heart attacks had always been treated with the utmost respect. Not so, however, in the inhuman Legion.

Braeling caught him by the shoulder and shook him violently while he shouted:

"You'll do nothing of the sort. I'll put some stiffening into your rotten backbone. Why the hell didn't you join the Girl Guides instead of the Legion? *Bon dieu!* Even that would be too strenuous for you. You belong in an old ladies' home. Stand up! Stand steady!"

And he backed up the order by smacking Forbes-Smith across the mouth with the palm of his hand.

The force of the blow sent Forbes-Smith to his knees. He did not faint. He forgot all about his heart. At that second he would have given a million dollars for the privilege of digging his bayonet up to the hilt in Braeling's belly. A surge of red hate swept through him. He was sick of being laughed at and jeered at, and kicked and cuffed and clouted. Even off parade his life was a dismal hell. In the barrack room he was at the mercy of playful drunks who tied his clothes in knots and tipped him out of bed on to the floor.

He realized the futility of trying to establish his identity. It couldn't be done. He didn't even have the actual cash wherewith to buy a stamp to mail a letter to his wife—nor the courage to write to her. For five weeks he had been too dazed and weary to think of writing. There was so much to explain and he didn't know where to start. Nor did he have either paper or pencils or envelops. He was trapped and done for. He could not stand the strain much longer, but at least he could show these brutes that he was not afraid of them.

Standing over him, Braeling was bellowing—

"Get up, you louse, or I'll boost you up with the toe of my boot!"

Forbes-Smith made a tremendous effort. Gritting his teeth, he staggered to his feet.

"*Bon!*" snorted the sergeant. "That's a beginning, anyway. You're trying. Got a weak heart, have you? All right, get to hell off this parade ground and report sick. Go tell your troubles to the nice, kind doctor man. Maybe he'll find something the matter with you that'll keep you out of my sight for the next few years."

"No," gasped Forbes-Smith. "I don't care what happens. I'll stay."

"You'll go!" thundered Braeling, in-

censed by this utter lack of discipline. "When I say go, I mean go! Hyena! Malingerer! I won't have you disrupting the squad with your antics. You say you have a weak heart—prove it! When the doctors are through with you I'll teach you to answer yes when I give you an order . . . Corporal Boldini, take this ape back to barracks. See he lines up for sick parade. Tell the major he complains of a bad heart. That's all. March him away!"

Half an hour later Forbes-Smith, stood before the doctor, a stout, bald man with a gray beard and a pince-nez cocked askew on his nose. He wore a white blouse and scarlet trousers. He peered at Forbes-Smith over the rims of his glasses while the corporal made his report.

"A weak heart," he commented. "Never heard of a Legionnaire with a weak heart. Very strange. Very. Startling. How long have you had this weak heart, my poor boy?"

"Years," explained Forbes-Smith. "It is a chronic condition, *Monsieur le Major.* Cardiac debility. Specialists who have examined me have said—"

The doctor frowned ominously.

"Specialists," he grunted. "Never heard of a Legionnaire consulting specialists. How about the doctors who examined you when you enlisted? What did they have to say?"

"Well, you see, *Monsieur le Major,*" hazarded Forbes-Smith, "I was never examined, because—"

"Astounding!" exclaimed the doctor, taking off his glasses and wiping them on the hem of his blouse. "Marvelous! Never examined! That's the best one yet. They must have accepted you on the strength of your handsome countenance. Most irregular. Don't be a fool, my boy. Strip. I'll listen to this organ of yours."

Forbes-Smith unhooked his tunic and peeled off his shirt.

"More," ordered the doctor. "Pants and all. What you need," he went on, wrinkling his nose, "is a bath—soap and water. *Pff! Quelle odeur!*" He swabbed Forbes-Smith's chest with a wad of absorbent cotton dipped in alcohol. "You aren't overdeveloped muscularly," he grumbled, flicking the patient's arm with his thumbnail. "Soft as jelly. Still, you're sound enough. No physical defects. I've seen worse specimens. Need building up, that's all. Hard work'll do the trick. Let's examine this heart."

He bent over and pressed an ear against Forbes-Smith's chest.

"Terrible!" he said after awhile. "Terrible!"

"You mean—" began Forbes-Smith, hoping to hear the very worst.

"I mean there is not a single thing the matter with your heart," the doctor assured him. "It is as sound as a bell. Organically sound. It's a bit jumpy but that's natural enough in your present state. I'll bet you have never done a stroke of work in your life. However, that's none of my business."

"I assure you," insisted Forbes-Smith, "the highest authorities have told me my heart—"

The doctor turned to his clerk.

"*Non motivé,*" he snapped. "Mark this man as having reported sick without good cause. Furthermore," he dictated, "this soldier shows signs of moral degeneracy; he does not seem to have been to the showerbaths for several weeks. Needs close supervision and rigorous discipline. Punishment inflicted by the examining major: eight days confinement to barracks and eight days punishment drill."

He signed the report and gave it to Corporal Boldini.

"Take this man over to the company office," he ordered. "Present my compliments to Captain Lansson and tell him that the prisoner is not fit to be touched with a pair of tongs."

"I haven't had a chance to get near the showers!" cried Forbes-Smith. "Every time I try—"

"Outside!" rasped the major. "Remove him at once. He's making the infirmary stink!"

IT WAS a black day for Forbes-Smith.

His company commander treated him as though he were a pariah dog. He tried to explain that he was not in the habit of being dirty, that he loathed dirt, but that he simply could not cavort under a shower with dozens of stark naked men swarming around him. He had tried it once and had not managed to wet the tip end of his finger. But nobody, least of all the captain, wanted to hear what he had to say.

"If this happens again," swore Captain Lansson, "I'll have you court-martialed. You're not going to contaminate the entire depot—not if I can avoid it. I don't know what kind of foul surroundings you have been accustomed to, but you'll have to acquire a brand new set of habits if you want to keep away from the penal battalion. At the very next offense that's where you are going."

Nor was this humiliation considered sufficient. The orderly sergeant marched the culprit to the baths and handed him over to four brawny, hilarious Legionnaires who scoured him with pumice stone, dish cloths and straw brushes until the skin was nearly scraped off his back. When they pitched him out he was not only clean but black and blue.

"You're a disgrace to your regiment," the orderly sergeant snorted. "Make a bundle of those clothes and wash them out this evening before you report for punishment drill. If they're not spotless and as sweet as a maiden's breath you'll know what to expect—and that means cells."

Cells! Court-martial! Penal battalion! The words rang in Forbes-Smith's brain. He knew he was doomed. Doctors, officers and sergeants—the whole world—was leagued against him. The routine work was hard enough. Eight days punishment drill coming on top of all the other duties he had to perform would mean his finish. He didn't care. He looked forward eagerly to the moment when he would curl up and slip away into oblivion.

Life was altogether too complex. Even if he survived, even if he got out of the Legion some day, he would have his wife to face. He could not expect to make her understand why he had gone away, nor why he had not written for five weeks. She would never forgive him. She couldn't. It was hopeless. His life was smashed. He no longer had enough ambition to want to get out of the Legion. Since he was going to die he might as well die at Sidi-bel-Abbès.

Nevertheless, he felt that he ought to make an effort and write a farewell note to his wife: the sort of letter a condemned man might write on the eve of his execution.

He did so that evening in the guard room, where he was locked up for the night after two hours of intensive pack drill which left him in a state of collapse. When the door closed behind him he had just enough energy to creep over to the sleeping platform. Too sore to stretch out on the bare boards, he sat hunched over, resting his head on his knees.

Several other Legionnaires kept him company. Most of them were inebriated, and at least one was suffering from a mild case of delirium tremens. Crawling along on all fours, he was pursuing an imaginary spider which, he asserted, was purple with bright green stripes. In his mind's eye he saw this colorful spider climb up Forbes-Smith's back.

"Brush it off," he ordered. "It's mine. I want it."

Forbes-Smith shuddered. He had not been brought up to associate with demented soldiers. Such creatures did not exist in Overbrook. He was not sure what he ought to do.

"Don't be absurd," he said wearily. "You're seeing things."

This suggestion infuriated the Legionnaire. Without warning he hurled himself upon Forbes-Smith and tried to chew a piece out of the nape of his neck.

It happened so suddenly that Forbes-Smith had no time to think. Instinctively, blindly, he fought off his aggressor. Locked together they fell off

the sleeping platform on to the floor. As luck would have it Smith came up on top. His right fist sweeping through the air connected with the drunk's lower jaw, which was hanging open. The man's head snapped back on his shoulders. He let out a grunt which filled Forbes-Smith with savage joy.

Thereupon he went berserk. The bitterness he had been storing up in his heart for weeks exploded violently. Completely forgetting how tired he was, he went for that unfortunate trooper with intent to kill—and would have killed him if, at the last minute, one of the onlookers had not hoisted him off his victim's chest and slung him against the wall.

He bounced off the floor, torn and bleeding, eyes ablaze, ready for more. But he found his way barred by a chunky, thickset man with beady black eyes and a broken nose.

"Let me at him!" snarled Forbes-Smith. "I've had enough of this! Too much. I'll settle his hash!"

"Cool off," urged the thickset man, taking Forbes-Smith by the arm. "If you are not careful, *mon vieux*, the sergeant of the guard will be in here, and you'll be on your way to the cells. That *type* meant no harm. And anyway you have half murdered him. Leave him alone."

Forbes-Smith's eyes cleared. He recognized one of his roommates, a veteran by the name of Vandercleef—a stolid, matter-of-fact Dutchman with seven medals in a row on his No. 1 tunic. Once a month, regularly, he cut loose, drank too much, fought the town picket, and ended up in the guardhouse. At other times he was dependable and efficient.

He kept a tight grip on Forbes-Smith's arm.

"I didn't know you had it in you," he chuckled. "Come on over and sit down." He shoved him back onto the platform. "The Legion is all right," he went on. "The trouble is with you. What is the sense in making so much trouble for yourself? You can not win. A smart man like you, with education, you could earn promotion in no time at all."

"Promotion!" Forbes-Smith laughed shakily. "If you knew how little I care about such things."

"You're too good for the Legion, eh? You will get over that some day. You are learning."

"I'm dying," corrected Forbes-Smith, gingerly feeling his chest. "By inches. This life is killing me. I have seven more days pack drill to do. I won't reach the end of it. Heart specialists in Philadelphia have told me—"

"Listen," broke in Vandercleef, "I am not a specialist, but I will make you a bet. If you are dead one week from today I buy a wreath to put on your grave; if you are not dead you come downtown with me and we have a little celebration."

FORBES-SMITH had not touched a drop of anything stronger than water since he he had landed at the depot. He was entitled to half a liter of wine a day with his rations, but he had allowed whoever wanted the filthy stuff to have it.

He shook his head.

"I can't drink cheap wine," he explained.

"It is good wine," Vandercleef retorted. "Don't turn your nose up so high at everything. Be more sociable. *Gottverdom*, I watch you; you are miserable and sad. You have no friends. It is your own fault. A recruit must treat his comrades. That is the custom. When you have done that you will belong. I speak for your own good. So, is it a bargain—the wreath or the little celebration?"

His deliberate way of talking had a soothing effect upon Forbes-Smith.

"You'd be willing to go out with me?" he inquired. "With a moral degenerate? I'm no better than a hog."

"A little dirt is nothing," shrugged Vandercleef. "You have to get adjusted. It takes time. Maybe your home was not clean—civilians do not appreciate such things. But you will soon find out."

Forbes-Smith's mind flashed back to his home in Overbrook with its waxed floors and spotless furniture, where the least speck of dust was tracked down with vacuum cleaners and brooms and cloths. But that part of his life was growing misty and dim. He would never see Overbrook again. He didn't want to see it. The only real thing was the guardroom with its smell of nausea and its drunks, snoring on the bare boards of the sleeping platform.

He tried to humor Vandercleef.

"I'd take you up on that bet," he admitted, "but I haven't a penny to my name."

"How long have you been in the Legion? Six weeks next Monday? All right, you draw your enlistment bonus on Monday—two hundred and fifty francs. You have forgotten it?"

Forbes-Smith knew nothing about bonuses.

"I won't be here," he said gloomily. "I had one attack today. The next one—"

"Is it a bargain?" insisted Vandercleef, who wanted to help lap up the two hundred and fifty francs.

"I don't care one way or the other. I've got one foot in the grave this very minute."

"We keep the other foot out until after the party," Vandercleef said hopefully. "Next week I am on the draft for the Tafilalet column. I will not see another city for a year maybe. We paint the town red. I show you everything, the *village nègre* and the girls—"

"Girls" reminded Forbes-Smith of his wife. The thought was worse than acute toothache.

"Look here," he agreed, "I'll do anything you say. I'll *give* you the bonus—on one condition. Can you get me some writing paper and a pencil and a stamp? I must write a letter and mail it at once."

Vandercleef was a methodical man. From one pocket he extracted a sheet of ruled notepaper and a stamped envelop, from another he drew a lead pencil.

"To write to my mother," he explained. "You take it. It is a small matter. Tomorrow I can get more. And the money—you keep it. We have this party together when you come out."

So, bending over until his nose nearly touched the paper, for the light was almost gone, Forbes-Smith wrote to his wife for the first time in five weeks. It was stilted and cold. He had but one sheet of paper and he had to leave out everything but essentials.

My dear Lucy:

I am gone and you must forget me. Our life is wrecked. I do not expect forgiveness. I acted like a cad when I left you that day in Paris. I am very sorry. It is too late now to change anything. I suppose you will be glad to be rid of me, for I was a constant source of worry and annoyance. I do not suppose I need ask you not to try to find me. I am not worth the bother. Moreover you would be wasting your time. I shall write within the next few days to my attorneys giving them full power to dispose of the house should you choose to do so. After this scandal I do not suppose that you will want to live in Overbrook. In the long run I am sure you will be far happier without me.

Your affectionate husband,

—JOHN J. FORBES-SMITH

He placed the letter in the envelop and handed it to Vandercleef.

"You won't forget it," he urged. "It's important."

"First thing in the morning it goes in the mail box," promised the Dutchman. "And don't you forget the bonus, *ma vieille branche*. First thing Monday morning."

"That's all settled," agreed Forbes-Smith, a wry smile on his lips. "If I'm still alive we'll celebrate."

After that he felt much better. A dead weight seemed to have been lifted off his shoulders. He had made a clean break with the past. He could die without any regrets. In some inexplicable fashion the guardroom lost some of its gloomy horror, the last ray of sunlight slanting in through the bars glowed cheerfully, and the drunks themselves ceased to be so repellent. He was a man among men. In the twilight he ran his fingers over his right forearm; it was as hard as iron.

This discovery filled him with child-like satisfaction. He lay down beside Vandercleef and in three seconds was sound asleep.

STRANGE to say he was still alive on the following Monday morning. He had had no more heart attacks. In fact he was putting on weight. His hands were horny and his shoulders were inured to the weight of his pack. He snapped up to attention as though he really meant it.

"You're coming on," commented Sergeant Braeling. "In another couple of months you may know how to salute."

"Thank you, *mon Sergent*," snapped Forbes-Smith. "And would it be an effect of your goodness to tell me where I go to draw my enlistment bonus?"

"Ha!" said Braeling. "You've thought of that, have you? You can draw it at the regimental office after roll call. What are you going to do with the money? You're not going to drink it, are you?"

"That is my intention, *mon Sergent*," admitted Forbes-Smith, standing like a rock, hands down, chin up, heels together, toes turned out at the prescribed angle of 45 degrees. "I expect to be very drunk, *mon Sergent*. I am told it is the proper thing for recruits to do, *mon Sergent*."

Braeling clouted him over the shoulder.

"Good boy!" he roared. "That's how I like to hear 'em talk. Have a good time! Have one for the old drill sergeant. Good luck, Legionnaire!"

Forbes-Smith marched away with a brisk, springy step as though he were treading on air.

Deep down in his heart he felt that he ought to be very sad, very depressed, very miserable. His life was shattered. His wife's friends could be depended upon to blast his reputation to smithereens. He had no real friends of his own. To most people he was merely Mrs. Forbes-Smith's husband. They had always treated him with good humored contempt. Now they would rip hell out of him. He could never go back to Overbrook again. Under the circumstances the one thing for him to do was to die decently, as quickly as possible, and find peace in an anonymous grave.

But that day, try as he might, he could not keep his mind focused on such black thoughts. He could not even find as much fault as usual with his surroundings. It was distinctly pleasant to be clapped on the back by a mighty man like Braeling and to be called "good boy." It was good also to associate with rascally troopers who didn't give a damn if it snowed ink.

He did nothing more heroic than peel potatoes for the midday *rata*, attend a couple of inspection parades and sweep the courtyard with a homemade broom, but these chores were quickly over, the hours sped by, and before long he was swinging down the Avenue de la République with two hundred and fifty francs in his pocket.

Five Legionnaires, the veterans of the platoon, accompanied him. They were solemn faced and intent—five earnest men out on a spree. Their medals clinked on their chests, their steel tipped heels pounded the asphalt. Forbes-Smith was proud to be seen out with such a bodyguard.

"Where do we go, *les copains?*" he inquired as soon as they passed the barracks gate. "Where do we start?"

The five veterans swept him down the street beneath the spreading branches of dusty plane trees.

"We start," explained Vandercleef, grave as a judge, "we start with an anis at Madame Soubialli's café."

"Soubialli's," assented the four other veterans, lengthening their stride. "*Allons-y!*"

Anis is a pernicious drink. It has the color of dirty milk, its taste is rather sweet and insipid, and it possesses the latent properties of dynamite with a delay action fuse.

Forbes-Smith swallowed a couple of glasses without any ill effects. His head remained perfectly clear. The anis merely loosened his tongue and filled

him with a sense of well being. He had a grand time, an uproarious time, the best time he had ever had in his life. Before he was dragged out of Soubialli's he had kissed every waitress in the place.

From that café they went to another one.

There he listened dreamily to the dulcet tones of mechanical pianos, he watched goggle eyed the contortions of a Nubian muscle dancer, in fact he did all the things a doughty, devil-may-care Legionnaire does on a night out with two hundred and fifty francs burning holes in his pocket.

After awhile the party showed signs of growing rowdy. The solemn faced veterans were as solemn as ever, but their behavior gave evidence of becoming more purposeful.

In a narrow street behind the covered market a row started between the Legionnaires and a flock of Arabs who didn't want their meat stalls demolished. Were those stalls smashed? They were. Forbes-Smith came out of the fray with a skinned, vitrous eyed, bloody goat's head in one hand and an *entrecôte* clutched in the other.

The Arabs fled. The Legionnaires fled in the opposite direction when an armed picket suddenly appeared upon the scene.

"Trophies," panted Forbes-Smith, galloping along beside Vandercleef. "Trophies of the chase. I'm a big game hunter." He waved the gory goat's head in the air.

"Pitch them over the wall," ordered Vandercleef. "It's five years if you're caught."

"What of it?" gurgled the big game hunter. "I'm plumbing the depths of degradation. I am covering myself with mud. I hope they shoot me!"

"I'm not worrying about you," rasped Vandercleef. "I'm thinking of myself. The draft leaves at five in the morning—I don't want to be left behind. Get rid of that stuff, quick!"

Over the wall went the trophies of the chase.

LATER on the Legionnaires washed up in a dismal grog shop in the Spanish quarter not far from the station.

"One more and finish," said Vandercleef.

"Quitter!" exclaimed Forbes-Smith. "It is not nine o'clock."

"But we have no passes and must be back before 'lights out,'" explained Vandercleef. "Don't call me a quitter, you lousy recruit, or I'll flatten you out."

"I said quitter and I mean quitter," cried Forbes-Smith. "I'm not going back to barracks until the break of day, and I'll spit in the orderly sergeant's eye!"

Vandercleef looked him over thoughtfully.

"I know how you feel," he grunted. "We won't argue. Put that *schnapps* under your belt and we'll go. A man must know when to stop."

Forbes-Smith downed the firewater at one gulp.

"*Patron,*" he called out, "another round of the same!"

"No more," Vandercleef said firmly. "The picket is looking for us, you poor fool. We must steer a straight course back to barracks."

As he spoke he laid a hand on Forbes-Smith's arm and tried to drag him away. But Forbes-Smith had no intention of being taken back to the depot. The *schnapps* had detonated the appalling mixture of anis, cognac, gin and wine he had been absorbing. All at once he was endowed with the strength of ten men and the stubbornness of ten mules.

He tore away from Vandercleef and stumbled back to the bar.

"*Patron,*" he repeated, "give me a bottle of this milksop!"

All five veterans intervened. They grabbed him by his arms and legs and the scruff of his neck, but he wriggled, squirmed, ducked and before anybody could stop him, bolted out of the grog shop. He sped down the dark street, turned a few corners and, carried on by his own momentum, skidded out into the

Avenue Emile Loubet, the main artery of Sidi-bel-Abbès.

Hurtling through the crowd, he collided against a tree trunk and sat down in the gutter.

For a moment, stunned by the force of the impact, he gazed up stupidly into the faces of the bystanders. They scowled at him. The civilian population of Sidi-bel-Abbès has the greatest admiration for the Foreign Legion as a regiment (which enables it to make a living), but hand in hand with this admiration goes the most intense distrust of the average Legionnaire who is reputed to be capable of any and every crime.

"I am sitting in the gutter!" thought Forbes-Smith. "This is most extraordinary. How on earth did I get here? I really must stand up."

He was about to do so when a face swam within his line of vision. The light of a street lamp shone full upon it. A startled yelp burst from his lips. The face was the face of his wife—Lucy! Lucy, all dressed in white, walking swiftly down the Avenue Emile Loubet, at Sidi-bel-Abbès, in Algeria! Behind her tottered a station porter bowed down beneath the weight of a wardrobe trunk, a hat box and a suitcase.

"This is the end," hiccoughed Forbes-Smith, his hair standing up on end. "I am seeing things just like that poor guy in the guardroom. It can't be so!"

But it was so. She was unmistakably real. Wan and careworn, no doubt, but real flesh and blood and clothes. It could not possibly be a case of mistaken identity. Small details leaped at Forbes-Smith: The cut steel lizard ornament on her hat, the way in which she drew down the right hand corner of her mouth. Even the labels on the suit case were familiar.

She caught sight of him squatting in the gutter. She drew in her chin, frowned slightly—and went on.

She had not recognized him, not with that beard and that uniform. The glance she had given him was wholly impersonal. If she thought about him at all she probably wondered why he was sitting in the gutter. Threading her way through the crowd, she went straight on toward the Hotel Continentale.

But that one swift glimpse was too much for Forbes-Smith. All the joy went out of life. She had tracked him all the way to Sidi-bel-Abbès! The postmark on his letter must have given her a clue. She would make inquiries. Since she had decided to find him, instead of letting him go, nothing could stop her. Nothing!

He dreaded meeting her face to face more than he dreaded death itself. She was full of good qualities, and he loved her dearly, but his mind boggled at the prospect of having to explain and apologize and explain again. She could not possibly understand.

As if a spring had been released beneath him he leaped to his feet and streaked across the avenue at top speed. He did not stop until he came within sight of the barracks. There he pulled up, adjusted his tunic, set his *képi* on straight and marched sedately past the sergeant of the guard.

He made a bee-line for the sergeants' mess.

"I want," he told the orderly who barred his way, "I want to speak to Sergeant Braeling at once."

"A matter of service?" inquired the orderly.

"No—private."

The orderly whistled softly.

"If I were you I'd let it wait until morning," he advised. "It's against the regulations."

"You tell Sergeant Braeling I want to see him," rasped Forbes-Smith, "or I'll murder you. *Dégrouilles-toi, bon dieu!*"

"Have it your own way," agreed the orderly, backing hastily away. "Only don't come and tell me I didn't warn you."

HALF a minute later Braeling appeared. He was in his shirt sleeves, holding a billard cue in his hand.

"Well?" he snapped.

Forbes-Smith sprang to attention. His

heels came together with a smack.

"It's this way, *mon Sergent,*" he began. "Something has happened. Something terrible."

Braeling looked unconvinced.

"What do you want?"

It was no time to beat about the bush.

"Could I—" Forbes-Smith stammered. "May I volunteer for the Tafilalet column. I'd like to go—"

The sergeant came a step closer. He took Forbes-Smith by the elbow and swung him around to the light.

"I thought you were going downtown to spend your bonus money," he grunted.

"I went, *mon Sergent,* but this thing happened. I can't stay at Sidi-bel-Abbès. I want to volunteer. I want to get away—as far away as possible."

"What happened?"

There was nothing for it but the truth.

"It's my wife," Forbes-Smith confessed. "She's here. I saw her in the street."

Braeling did not crack a smile. He nodded his head slowly.

"Hm. I see. She has followed you, has she? That's bad. Women—I know something about them myself. I had a wife once, back in Hanover. That's why I'm here now."

For a moment he was no longer a sergeant of the Legion, but a plain human being with troubles of his own.

"About the draft," insisted Forbes-Smith. "May I volunteer?"

"You can't even shoot straight as yet."

"I can learn as I go."

"The column is going all the way to El Boroudj according to the latest reports. A good many men won't come back."

"That suits me, *mon Sergent.*"

Braeling peered straight into the Legionnaire's eyes, trying to read his thoughts. From the billard room came a gust of loud laughter.

"The Legion isn't a suicide club," the sergeant pointed out. "*You* don't count, my boy. You're a bayonet unit, and that's all. We don't want heroes in the Legion. We need steady files on parade—men who have learned to do what they're told without wavering."

"I have learned my lesson."

Braeling tugged at his beard.

"I think you have. And this wife of yours—she'll make a fuss if she gets a chance?"

"A fuss is no name for it!"

A grin spread across the sergeant's face.

"I suppose she's got a pretty, pearl handled revolver in her handbag. She must be desperate if she's come all this distance."

"Er—yes. Yes, that's it," Forbes-Smith gulped.

He was appalled at the very idea of his level headed, law abiding wife carrying a revolver about in her handbag.

"And you're more afraid of her than you are of the Chleuh!" Braeling laughed. "I don't blame you. I'd take my chance with the Chleuh any day rather than face some women. All right, my boy, you're a damn fool, and I'm acting in a reprehensible manner—prejudicial, as they say, to good order and military discipline—but a couple of men have gone sick. I'll let you go. Clear out! Pack your kit and be ready to fall in tomorrow morning at five. I'll fix it for you tonight at the company office. And don't worry—your wife can't follow where you're going, that's one thing certain."

Human nature is astonishing. Hardly were the words out of the sergeant's mouth before Forbes-Smith realized that he did not want to go to the Tafilalet at any price. The one thing he wanted to do was to take his wife in his arms, and tell her how he had missed her and how sorry he was he had behaved so abominably.

But it was too late to turn back. When the column marched away the next morning he marched with it. Until the last second he hoped a miracle might happen and that Lucy would suddenly come running toward him. But no miracle occurred. At that early hour, no doubt, she was still fast asleep. The only civilians on the platform were some ox-eyed Arabs who watched the departure of the troop train with placid unconcern.

Forbes-Smith sat down on the floor of the box car and buried his face in his hands.

"*Ça va pas?*" inquired Vandercleef. "It goes not, my old one?"

"No," groaned Forbes-Smith. "It goes not at all."

"That is because of the party last night," Vandercleef chuckled. "It will wear off in a little while."

"I wish I were dead!"

Vandercleef was busy uncorking a bottle of *vin ordinaire.*

"*Eh bien,*" he commented, "that will come too in a little while. Why think about it? It comes when it comes and not a minute sooner." He thrust the bottle into the sufferer's hand. "Have a drink."

Angrily Forbes-Smith snatched at the bottle and carried it to his lips. The jolting of the box car spilled the wine down his neck.

IT WAS high noon when the detachment reached the outskirts of Ain-Affoulah. Seen through the shimmering heat haze the walls of the *ksar* seemed to be as filmy and opalescent as the skin of a soap bubble. They flashed and sparkled as though, beneath the impact of the sun's white hot rays, they were about to explode.

To the left of the village straggled a row of date palm trees with slender, wind bent holes and ragged mops of acid-green leaves. In the background loomed a range of pale blue hills.

"It looks," said Forbes-Smith, wiping the sweat off his cheeks, "it looks like a badly colored picture postcard."

"Maybe," grunted Vandercleef. "But to me it looks like trouble. They don't wait so long to throw open the gates when they want to talk peace."

Forbes-Smith dragged the brim of his *képi* down over his eyes and peered across the plain. The light dazzled him. He could just make out the blurred shapes of a group of Spahis riding at a walk toward the gate—six men in khaki cloaks, and an officer whose scarlet cap looked like a drop of blood against the ashen gray plain. Black shadows crawled beneath the bellies of the horses.

"So you think we're going to fight," he jeered. "You're an optimist."

Vandercleef shrugged his shoulders.

"They are not as foolish as they used to be, these Chleuh, but they'll fight all right when the time comes. We've only been in rebel country for nine days. Pretty soon we'll get it—here or elsewhere. You never can tell."

"I wish they'd make up their minds," grumbled Forbes-Smith. "My water bottle is empty."

The Dutchman stared at him pityingly.

"It always is empty. How often must I tell you, you specimen *of* a cow, *never* to guzzle your last drop of water until you know where your next supply is coming from?"

He was the oldest soldier in the squad, and it was part of his job on the line of march to see that the *bleuzailles* learned their trade.

"I thought I could get more as soon as we reached the village," said Forbes-Smith.

"You thought—you thought! You make me sick, thinking. It is a dry nurse you need. Did you think the detachment has been sent to Ain-Affoulah to admire the scenery? Didn't you hear what the captain said when we started out this morning?"

Forbes-Smith remembered perfectly well what the captain had said. So far as he was concerned it was just so much hot air. The detachment, a company of the Legion and fifty Spahis, had been detailed to go up a side valley and occupy Ain-Affoulah while the bulk of the column headed toward El Boroudj.

"Our mission," the captain had explained while the troopers shuddered in the chilly dawn, "is of vital importance. Ain-Affoulah is a hotbed of unrest. Our task is to show these Chleuh that we are ready to give them a taste of cold steel at the first hint of treachery."

He talked eloquently, but he talked

too much. Nine days of steady marching through the Tafilalet hills had dulled Forbes-Smith's taste for martial discourses.

He had been looking forward to a slam-bang fight with hordes of rebels as soon as he reached the hills, a fight which would sweep him out of existence, away from all doubts and worries and perplexities. Day after day he had waited for the storm to break, but nothing had happened. He had marched up one boulder choked valley and down the next. Not a shot had been fired, not a rebel had been sighted.

By the time he reached Ain-Affoulah he was completely disillusioned. He glared at Vandercleef, who was still bawling him out.

"All right," he broke in. "You don't have to be so damn particular. I'm not complaining. A few minutes more or less—"

Then he stopped. A puff of smoke had appeared on the crest of the wall just above the gateway. One puff—another—a third . . . A dozen more all in a row. The Spahis' horses shied wildly. Two of the riders fell to the ground. The others swerved and raced back toward the detachment. Seconds later, carrying crisp and clear across the plain, came the sound of the shots.

"A few minutes is right," commented Vandercleef. He unhooked his water bottle and shoved it at Forbes-Smith. "Here, you damn fool, take a couple of swallows. You'll need 'em before we're through. *Ça va barder!*"

Forbes-Smith could not take his eyes off the two dark shapes lying in the glittering dust.

"Hey!" repeated the Dutchman. "I'm offering you a drink. Do you want it or not?"

Forbes-Smith spat out a mouthful of dust.

"Much obliged," he answered. "I can wait."

At the back of his mind he was thinking:

"I've had my last drink. In a little while I'll be lying out there too. I'm glad it's over." And as an afterthought he added, "Poor Lucy! She'll be better off without me."

"You're an ungrateful swine," snorted Vandercleef. "It's not every old soldier who would offer a drink to a recruit. I hope you choke, my lad."

"You don't understand," said Forbes-Smith. "Believe me, I don't mean to—"

The shrill blast of a whistle cut him short.

Away at the head of the column somebody shouted an order. The platoon sergeants picked it up.

"Company, to the right form line. Double march! No. 3 Platoon, right wheel—double march!"

THERE was no more fuss or confusion than there would have been on the parade ground at Sidi-bel-Abbès. The Legionnaires moved with the swift precision of automatons. Forbes-Smith felt a thrill of pride run down his spine as the company swung into line and came to a halt. He was a cog in a machine—a smooth running fighting machine! The sensation was not at all unpleasant. He might be about to die, but he was going to die in style. He stood as stiff as a ramrod, looking straight to his front.

Captain Darron, the company commander, was walking swiftly along the front of the troops. He was a tall, long legged man with a close cropped mustache, a long nose and a very bored manner. His *képi* was perched over one ear; beneath his arm he carried a silver mounted riding crop.

Midway down the line he turned and faced the Legionnaires. He looked very calm and cool and debonair. Forbes-Smith could not help admiring him intensely.

"My lads," said the captain, "we are going to attack. These misguided rebels are laboring under the impression that behind their ramparts they are safe."

He smiled. It was such a hearty, friendly smile that Forbes-Smith grinned back at him.

"He's great!" he whispered in Vandercleef's ear. "And I thought when I first saw him—"

"Shut your foul mouth!" rasped the sergeant. "You're on parade. You'll do ten days defaulters' drill for this."

"It is too hot for comfort," Darron was saying. "The sooner we get in and clean up the place the better. The mountain guns are thirty kilometers away with the main column; we have no scaling ladders, and that gate is too stout to be battered down with gun butts." He paused to let this sink in, then, raising his voice, he went on, "I want three volunteers to plant a charge of dynamite beneath the gate and blow it up . . . Volunteers, three paces step forward—"

Out of the tail of his eye Forbes-Smith saw Vandercleef move. He too moved like a streak of greased lightning. Elbowing his way through the front rank, he bore down on Darrow as fast as his legs would carry him.

A yard or so from the captain he slithered to a standstill.

"*Moi, mon Capitaine!*" he panted. "Take me!"

Darron looked mildly surprised. He stared hard at the perspiring Legionnaire and, by degrees, his face relaxed.

"You?" he commented. "I assume you wish to volunteer."

"I do, *mon Capitaine*—with your kind permission."

"With my kind permission," snapped Darron, "you will be good enough to get back where you belong. I said three paces step forward—not thirty."

Forbes-Smith retraced his steps. Twenty other men had stepped out of the ranks. Most of them were steady going old-timers. Vandercleef was there, as stolid and unemotional as ever. He gave Forbes-Smith a look of bitter scorn, then glanced away as though the sight of that beet-red countenance was more than he could bear.

"I have missed my chance," thought Forbes-Smith. "What a fool I am! I'll never learn."

He could have kicked himself.

As soon as he was back in place the captain marched over and inspected the volunteers. First he stopped in front of a corporal by the name of Arbelle—a squat, chunky man with a gray beard.

"Service?" he inquired.

"Eleven years, *mon Capitaine.* Tonkin, Sudan, Madagascar. Eight campaigns. Five wounds."

"Not to speak of the Legion of Honor," added Darron. "You'll do. Step out."

Forbes-Smith's spirits sank lower and lower.

Darron spoke to several men. For reasons of his own he did not select them. Finally he came to Vandercleef.

"Service?"

"Ten years, *mon Capitaine.* Sudan, Riff, Tadla. Two wounds."

"You'll do. Step out."

The captain's glance shifted to Forbes-Smith.

"How about you?" he demanded. "How much service?"

"Three months," Forbes-Smith blurted out. "No medals, no campaigns, no wounds. Nothing."

"Step out," ordered Darron. "You're as fleet footed as a gazelle."

Forbes-Smith's chest expanded till the buttons threatened to pop off his tunic.

"Listen to me," Darron went on. "The Spahis are going to create a diversion on the left flank. The company will then move forward to within five hundred meters of the ramparts and open fire on the enemy position while you are placing the charge beneath the gate. As soon as the explosion occurs the assault will take place."

He shook hands with the three men. The *vaguemestre* handed a package the size of a football to Corporal Arbelle. A piece of black fuse about a yard in length dangled through a gap in the canvas wrapper.

"Matches?" inquired the captain. "Got some? *Tout va bien.* You will stay with me until we take up our position."

He turned to the Legionnaires.

"Off packs! Take open order. From the center—extend!"

A MOMENT later they were under way. Darron swung across the plain at a walk. Slowly, imperceptibly almost, the walls of Ain-Affoulah grew higher until it seemed to Forbes-Smith that they overshadowed the whole plain.

Away off on the left the Spahis, riding in a dust cloud, were swinging around behind the palm trees.

Crack! A gob of smoke spouted out of a slit in the wall. Something went by overhead with a long drawn *wheeeep!* which made Forbes-Smith hunch his shoulders up around his neck.

"And you volunteered," grumbled Vandercleef. "If you start ducking now what will you do later on?"

Forbes-Smith said nothing. He was experiencing a very strange sensation in the region of his chest. It was as hollow as a drum—a yawning chasm which no amount of deep breathing could fill. And his feet were made of lead. Each step required a tremendous effort.

After that first shot came others, faster and faster. The bullets whined past his ears. They came in swarms with a swift, lisping rush. Glancing over his shoulder he saw a trooper on the extreme right of the line crumple up and pitch forward on to his face.

"Front!" barked the corporal, raising his voice to make himself heard above the din. "Look to your front and step out!"

Darron had lengthened his stride. Nearer came the wall. It no longer looked filmy and unsubstantial. It was built of rough stones and sun dried bricks—thick enough to withstand the disruptive force of armor piercing shells.

Suddenly the captain came to a halt.

"Prepare for salvo fire!" he shouted. "At four hundred meters. Target the embrasures on the ramparts. Ten rounds rapid!"

The uproar almost smothered his voice. A hail of bullets spurted in the dust at his feet. His orderly dropped as though poleaxed.

He waved the volunteers on their way.

"*Allez!*" he yelled. "*En avant!*"

The blast of the salvo stunned Forbes-Smith. He found himself running at top speed, elbow to elbow with the corporal. The gate was dead ahead, two hundred yards away. Through the haze of dust and smoke he could see the weather worn beams held together with bands of iron.

All at once, distinctly above the clamor, he heard a queer, smacking sound. Corporal Arbelle lurched against him. They went down in a heap. Blood gushed out of the corporal's mouth. He lay on his side, curled up as though he slept.

Forbes-Smith was still on hands and knees when Vandercleef snatched up the charge of dynamite.

"Match!" he yelled. "Get the match ready. Move!"

He lumbered on, stooping low as he drove through the sleet of lead. Ten yards—twenty . . . Then he spun around like a top and collapsed.

"Hurt?" gasped Forbes-Smith. "Wounded?"

"No, I'm picking violets!" howled Vandercleef. "Go on, thou lard headed imbecile. Go on!"

"Me?"

"Yes, you! What the hell did you volunteer for if—"

Forbes-Smith did not wait to hear the end of the sentence. He grabbed up the dynamite and went on. And as he ran he shrieked incoherent menaces at the enemy cowering behind the ramparts. He was filled with rage—red rage which twisted his face into a convulsive snarl and made the hair bristle on the nape of his neck.

The dirty cowards—afraid to come out in the open and fight it out like men. He'd show 'em! Everything else was blotted out of his mind. He didn't even feel the sting of the bullet which scraped the skin off his cheek. His feet had wings.

He could almost touch the gate. Abruptly his right leg gave way. He

rolled heels over head like a shot rabbit. He tried to stand up and went down again.

Cursing between clenched teeth, he squirmed along on his belly. The shadow of the gateway fell upon him. Another yard to go! A blackness was gathering before his eyes. His hands were numb. Awkwardly he scooped away a little sand and shoved the dynamite close to the gate. A match—his fingers were stiff and sticky with blood. The first match broke. He took out a handful and struck them all at once. The flame roasted his flesh, but he held it against the fuse until it began to sputter.

Then, keeping close to the wall, digging his nails into the earth, he dragged himself away.

Seconds later came the explosion—a tremendous blast which picked him up and hurled him through space in the midst of a whirling chaos of stones and dust and splintered fragments of wood.

THE NEXT thing he knew he was lying on a stretcher in the hospital marquee at column headquarters.

An orderly was bending over him, swabbing his face with a soapy rag. The soap got in his nose and made him sneeze.

"It's about time you woke up," exclaimed the orderly. "I have some news for you, my old one—good news."

Forbes-Smith stirred uneasily. A puzzled frown appeared between his eyes. The hospital tent, the rows of stretchers, even the orderly's pimply face were familiar, and yet unreal. It was as though he had seen them before in a blurred, haphazard dream.

"How long have I been here?" he croaked.

The orderly was scrubbing his ears, scrubbing hard.

"Five days. You'll get well. Temperature is down to normal today. In a month you'll be forming fours again."

A name popped into Forbes-Smith's mind.

"Ain-Affoulah. I was there, wasn't I—at Ain-Affoulah?"

"So they say. Sit up while I fix your bandages. Lean on my arm. That's just it, *mon lapin*. You have been mentioned in brigade orders for conspicuous bravery under fire. Are you listening to me? The general is coming over to see you. I heard them talking about it in the office a few minutes ago. He wants to congratulate you, I suppose. That's why I'm making you presentable."

"Conspicuous bravery under fire," murmured Forbes-Smith. *"C'est épatant!* The general is coming in here, is he, to see me?"

"That's what I heard. It's not every lousy Legionnaire who can say he's had a general to call on him. You're in luck. It looks to me like promotion or a ribbon. How are you feeling? Want to sit up?"

"I feel fine," declared Forbes-Smith. "Tell me—did they take Ain-Affoulah afterward?"

"Nothing to it. Only twenty-five casualties. Wait till I put your knapsack behind you. That'll give you something to rest on."

"There was a Legionnaire by the name of Vandercleef. Did he—was he—?"

"A Dutchman? He left for the base hospital with yesterday's convoy. He's all right. A bullet in the thigh. He left a message for you. Said he would be waiting at the depot to help you drink your back pay."

He picked up his basin of water and his soap.

"Lie still and don't spoil the set of those bandages," he ordered. "He'll be along any minute now."

As he slipped out the back door of the marquee a party of five officers came in the front way. There was a full general, a colonel, a surgeon-major and two staff captains. In front of this party stalked a sergeant of the Service Sanitaire.

He came to a halt at the foot of Forbes-Smith's stretcher.

"This," he announced, "is Legionnaire Smith, J., *mon Général*."

"I see," said General Caillard. He

had a long, sallow face, and cold, steel-gray eyes. He did not smile. In his gloved hand he held a sheaf of papers.

Forbes-Smith tried to look alert, expectant and glad.

"Are you," said the general, "Legionnaire Smith, J., No. 86,551?"

"Yes, *mon Général.*"

Caillard tugged at his white mustache. There was an ominous glitter in his eye.

"Oh!" he remarked; and after a long pause he said, "Ah-ha!" in a tone which was far from reassuring.

"In the first place," he went on, folding his hands behind his back, "I wish to congratulate you on your—er—feat, accomplishment, exploit, at Ain-Affoulah. Captain Darron speaks highly of your courage."

"Thank you, *mon Général,*" murmured the hero, looking down at his blanket.

"And now," pursued the general, "we come to another matter."

There was a metallic ring to his voice which made Forbes-Smith sit up and take notice.

"Will you kindly tell me why the devil, monsieur, you are masquerading in the ranks of the French Foreign Legion under an assumed name?"

Forbes-Smith shriveled up.

"I'm afraid—" he began.

"You are a confounded nuisance, monsieur," the general cut in. "Here am I, engaged in the task of pacifying a turbulent district, and I am snowed under, monsieur—snowed under, I repeat—by a veritable avalanche of messages, reports, and statements dealing with your private affairs. The heliograph has been monopolized by your case, monsieur. I can not get a single service message through without hours of delay. And that is the result of your disgraceful conduct, monsieur!"

"But what have I done?" queried Forbes-Smith.

Caillard shook the sheaf of papers at the Legionnaire.

"You name is not Smith, J!" he trumpeted. "What is your real name?"

"Forbes-Smith—"

"There you are—you admit it. Forbes-Smith. John Jefferson Forbes-Smith of Overbrook, Pennsylvania, in the United States of America. I know everything there is to be known about you—even to the mole on your specimen of a confounded nose, monsieur. Permit me to say, monsieur, that you have a wife of the most admirable, of the most persistent. A far better wife than you deserve. She has moved heaven and earth, chanceleries, foreign offices and ministers of war to find you."

"Oh, her!" muttered Forbes-Smith, at a loss for words.

"Yes, her—your wife, monsieur! I accuse you, monsieur, of never having joined the Foreign Legion at all. You never took the oath of allegiance. Do you deny this cardinal fact?"

"I tried to explain—"

"Impostor! You are an impostor! I have proof—a thousand proofs! Don't attempt to argue. Don't lie. The real Smith has been found. His name is Brown. A low criminal. A confidence man. He confessed after the Cherbourg police caught him trying to rob some of his compatriots. I have a copy of his signed confession right here in my possession—sent through ahead of important military messages. To avoid going to prison he desires to fulfill his engagement with the Legion. He tells how he made you drunk and slipped his enlistment papers into your pocket. He, at least, had joined the Legion, but at the last moment he changed his mind. You became the scapegoat."

"That's very true," agreed Forbes-Smith, "but—"

The general was so indignant that his eyes bulged like agates.

"But nothing, monsieur! You have placed us in a damnable position. It threatens to turn into an international crisis. We do not want you, we do not need you. *Sacré bon sang,* we don't have to kidnap recruits! Why didn't you protest? Why didn't you write or cable or wire, and establish your identity at once? I am tempted to believe, monsieur, that

you found a malicious delight in assuming the identity of this Smith. If I had my way I should have you dragged before the courts and tried for deceiving the military authorities."

Forbes-Smith propped himself up on his stretcher.

"Do you mean to tell me," he inquired, "that it's all over? I'm out of the Legion?"

"Kicked out, monsieur! But you were never in it. You have but yourself to blame. And now, no doubt, you will go home and slander us most foully!"

"That," said Forbes-Smith, "is one thing I shall not do."

"Your wife—"

Forbes-Smith laughed mirthlessly. The glamor and the romance were fading away; the old life was closing in upon him again, but somehow things were very different.

"Don't you worry about Mrs. Forbes-Smith," he urged. "Leave it to me. There won't be a word said."

"You have not answered my question," the general insisted. "Why didn't you explain who you were?"

"I did." Forbes-Smith chuckled. "And I landed in the cells. Not once but many times. But, *mon Général*, I have no regrets—none. In strict confidence, I have had the time of my life."

The general's wrath began to subside.

"Does that mean you do not intend to bring a suit for damages against the military authorities?" he demanded, squinting hard at the ex-soldier of the second class. "Your ambassador—"

Some trace of the barrack room manner still clung to Forbes-Smith.

"To hell with ambassadors," he said impolitely. "This is my business, not his. I have no complaint of any kind to make. I can explain everything to everybody's entire satisfaction. If they are not satisfied, *mon Général*, I don't give a damn. I hope I make my meaning clear."

"You do," purred the general. "*Eh bien, mon cher monsieur*, it only remains for me to congratulate you again on your gallant conduct and to assure you that your action at Ain-Affoulah will not go unrewarded." He cleared his throat. "Meanwhile, until you can be sent down to the base, permit me to offer you the hospitality of my private quarters, yes?"

THEY were walking down the Rue de la Paix toward the corner of the Rue Daunou. It was a warm, sunny day in June. The air stank of gasoline fumes.

"Tomorrow night we'll be on board ship," said Mrs. Forbes-Smith. "In a week we'll be home. It's going to be wonderful, dear, to be home with you."

"Oh, yeah!" said her husband, a far-away look in his eyes.

He walked with a slight limp, but there was a truculent, cocksureness about his gait which cleared a path for them through the crowd. In the lapel of his coat he wore a narrow red ribbon, the ribbon of the Legion of Honor.

"Oh, yeah?" mimicked his wife, squeezing his arm. "But we'll come back here again, won't we? We've done so many things and gone so many places since you—" there was a catch in her throat—"since you left the army. You're so different and so very nice. I've got a brand new husband after all these years, and I'm ever so proud of him."

They had reached the corner of the Rue Daunou. A sign caught Forbes-Smith's eye—Fred's American Bar.

He stopped short.

"I've just had an idea," he declared. "Wait for me here, dear. I shan't be five minutes."

He promptly pushed his way through the swing doors, went up to the bar, put one foot on the rail, beckoned the barman.

"Gimme a whisky-sour," he ordered.

Two seconds later the door swung open again. Mrs. Forbes-Smith came tripping in. She perched herself on one of the high stools in front of the bar.

"May I have a dry Martini?" she inquired diffidently. "I'd like to try one."

"Oh, yeah?" Forbes-Smith grinned.

And in front of the startled barman, shamelessly, they kissed.

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

IN connection with his story, "The Touch of a Hand," in this issue, I asked George E. Holt whether it was true that non-Americans are assigned American consular business in remote places. Such a situation appears in the story. Here's what the author has to say:

Encinitas, California

In 1912 or '13 I had the privilege of helping to start, through an article in the *Independent*, the agitation for the Americanization of our consular service. Later I kept after the subject through *Export Trade*, of which I was contributing editor. And at last the evil—for evil it certainly was—was more or less corrected by the Rogers Bill, which required that all consular jobs paying $1000 or more (I think my memory is correct) must be given to American citizens.

I felt the situation keenly when I was Acting Consul-General for Morocco. Not because American trade with that country had much chance, but because the system was wretched. I had two consular agents, at the two principal seaports, Casablanca and Mogador. One of them was a British subject; the other was Austrian. And both were engaged in commercial projects competitive with the American trade interests they were supposed to represent and extend. Furthermore, my consular interpreter was a French citizen, of Syrian birth; my clerk was a British subject, as was also the clerk of the legation. And the interpreters or "scribes" of the two consular agencies were native Moroccans, wealthy, engaged in trade—but serving as nominal American consular officials merely for the "protection" they thus secured against taxation, arrest, seizure of goods, etc. In all Morocco there were at that time only three non-official, native born, permanent American residents: two in Tangier, one in Casablanca.

MY article in the *Independent* pointed out the fact that a *majority* of the American consular service was made up of nationals of other countries. All of the consuls were, of course, American. But the majority of the vice-consuls, deputy consuls, clerks, interpreters, etc., were non-Americans. Even though there was a reason for this, it was bad business. The reason was that vice-consuls received (nominally, as clerks, for the vice-consulship and deputy consulship were unremunerated) from $800 to $1200 a year, mostly around the former figure. No American, unless he was of independent means, wanted such a post, or could afford it. Those who had means took them because of the social prestige, etc., they gave, particularly in social centers such as Berne, Florence, Rome, and other foreign cities of social importance.

As for the consular agents, they received one-half of the official fees of their district, up to a certain amount. But for one year, one of my agents in Morocco got $6.50, the other less than that. Never during the four years I was in the Tangier office did they pass the $10 mark. So it is quite manifest that Americans, unless they chanced to be living in the district, cared nothing for the jobs. The government had already tried out the scheme (I speak only of Morocco) of using naturalized Moroccans (Moors or Jews), but it didn't work, and so several agencies were discontinued.

Just what the situation is today I can't say, not having followed the business up. But my impression is that all consuls, vice-consuls, deputy consuls, are Americans; that a far larger part of the consular agents and minor officials are also Americans, although I suppose not completely. The vice-consular service has been made "career", with salaries attached, which has been helpful.

—GEORGE E. HOLT

ANOTHER letter on what constitutes "cold" in the Far North:

Vancouver, British Columbia

In reply to the enquiry of Mr. Harry S. Briggs in the issue of *Adventure* of April 15th, I can say as an old sourdough that I have frequently hit the trail when it was anywhere from 40° to 45° below zero, and did not find it either terriffic or dangerous to life. If, however, a head wind was encountered, a different story is told; it would be necessary then to get shelter from the wind as soon as possible, because it would not be long before one became chilled through, and get that sleepy feeling. I was nearly caught once and only gained shelter just in time. I think another half hour would have finished me.

I FOUND the best way of judging the temperature on the trail was the fact that when it was 40° below or lower that I could not untie the lash rope on my sleigh with my mitts off, but had to keep my mitts on, which any one who has had the experience knows is a fumbling job at best.

In one trip I made the winter of '98-'99 when I was on the trail from November to February I frequently traveled when the temperature was below 40°. This trip was from Dawson City up to the headwaters of the Forty Mile, and I was accompanied by Hugh O'Donnell; I was making a report of the 40 Mile and its tributaries for the Alaska Exploration Company of San Francisco.

As a final word, I would not advise any chechako to attempt to travel any distance at the temperatures mentioned, because for him it would be dangerous, but a sourdough would think nothing of it.

—MAURICE M. MARSDEN

LARRY O'CONNOR, who wrote "Master, Unlimited," in this issue, gives us a thumbnail sketch of himself:

Ketchikan, Alaska

I spent my youth on a Southwestern cattle ranch; but drifted down to the big salt water about the time barb wire became too prevalent on the range. Since that time I have followed the sea pretty constantly. I am in my fifty-second year, and I took my limited master's ticket for steam or sail a month before my twenty-fourth birthday. When Diesel engines began coming to the front I turned to the engine room; and I now hold a ticket as "Chief Engineer of Motor Vessels, any tonnage, any ocean."

—LARRY O'CONNOR

THE following anecdote I am quoting from a personal letter to me by William Wells, long a member of our Writers' Brigade, and recently become one of the Ask Adventure staff. It presents a realistic attitude toward a phase of Western history much written about but not always clearly comprehended. Since it is of general interest, I know the writer will be glad to have me pass it on to you:

Sisters, Oregon

To fully understand the Old West one must remember that the outlaws—the train and bank robbers, the horse thieves, the rustlers—were looked on by many much as the English peasantry of the time looked on Robin Hood and his men—gallant fellows who took from the rich and gave to the poor. They warred on the big cattlemen and the railroads, and nobody loved either one.

Most of them were reckless youngsters who hated an easy life and craved adventure. Nothing mean about them.

Here is a little yarn to illustrate:

Once with a string of saddle-horses and a light pack outfit I pulled in at the abandoned Bar Circle ranch on Yellow Creek in Western Colorado, hunting stray saddle-horses. I did not expect to find anybody there, but some of the Wild Bunch—Tom McCarty, Butch Cassidy, Harve Logan, Al White and two others whom I did not know—were there. I stayed right there. Some horses that I wanted ranged in that country, and anyway the boys wouldn't have liked it if I had pulled out. At the time, they had quite a bunch of saddle-horses (mostly stolen, I reckon) and were holding them under herd.

I GATHERED my horses, holding them in their bunch. For amusement we played monte and traded horses. It is all bosh about a man found with a stolen horse being shot or lynched. In the early days the big cow outfits would not sell a saddle-horse, and the horse outfits vented the brand of those they sold. In time many of the outfits went broke and their stock was sold, the horses scattered. Nobody wanted a saddle-horse covered with brands and vents, so the practise of venting went out of fashion. It is impossible to alter a brand on either horses or cattle so that it will not show to an expert.

So horses usually kept their original brands, and a bunch of saddle stock not belonging to a big outfit might have a different brand on every animal and nobody thought anything about it. If you found an animal bearing your brand in the possession of somebody else and could prove that you had not sold the horse, you took him and that was all there was to it.

So I was dead safe in trading for horses that might be stolen, so long as the brands did not belong to local outfits.

Of course if a posse had rounded up the gang I would have had a lot of explaining to do, but I was well known, and it wasn't at all likely that a posse would show up.

I HAD quite a winning streak at monte and won several hundred dollars, gold and silver coin, most likely stolen also.

It was too heavy to pack around, so I kept it in my bed roll. Every one of those boys was a robber with a price on his head, but I do not suppose that it ever entered their heads to take it.

After I had gathered my horses I pulled back up country and the gang went south. Soon afterward I was in Meeker, Colorado; and Charlie Shiedler, sheriff of Rio Blanco county, knowing that I had been in the lower country, asked if I had been at the Bar Circle and if any one had been there, so I told him.

"Well," Charlie said, "those guys went from there and held up a bank down south."

That was all there was to it. Great country, the Old West. —WILLIAM WELLS

A READER offers some antidotes for poison ivy:

Cape May, New Jersey

I saw in a recent issue of *Adventure* an article dealing with the treatment of poison-ivy. As this is the beginning of the season when the plant starts its work upon the adventurous traveler, I would like to give the following information for publication. Having myself suffered the torture of this obnoxious plant I can sympathize with any one getting this disease.

There is put out by H. K. Mulford Co. of Philadelphia a fluid called Rhus Toxicondendron. This is an extract of poison ivy and alcohol. The patient takes this three times a day in increasing doses until the limit of three to five drops is reached. It is taken in a little water on an empty stomach. It should take at least a week to reach the limit of the three or five drops. The system will become full of poison ivy; it will not be able to catch any of an external source. The extract is put out in four ounce bottles, costs about two dollars, and should last several seasons.

The second treatment consists of a "shot." This is an anti-toxin manufactured by the Erdle Laboratories of New York. One c.c. shot in the rump will cure a dose of poison ivy in quick order or will make the sufferer immune from the disease for several months. This treatment is of course given by a doctor. A "shot" costs several dollars.

I have read that plain gasoline applied externally will give relief and stop the spread of the ivy. For this I am unable to vouch. —MORTON GROVE

THOUGH none of us here in the office is a pistol expert, we (as of course does the author of the story in question) know better than to have made the slip which Mr. Criswell points out. The error is hereby acknowledged, and we'll be on our guard against this one in the future.

Tumwater, Washington

In the interest of accuracy, I am writing to point out a slip in the story, "The Laughing Fox," by A. deHerries Smith, which appeared in *Adventure* for May 1. In that story I find this sentence: "The mate slid out of his heavy sea jacket, produced the flat black shape of an automatic revolver, grinned at the helmsman, and stepped out into the night."

The only automatic revolver ever put on the market is no nearer flat than any other revolver, because it has a cylinder just like any other revolver. This gun is the Webley-Fosbery, designed by Colonel Fosbery of the British army and made in England by Webley & Scott. It is sold in this country by A. F. Stoeger Inc., 509 Fifth Avenue, New York. It is automatic to the extent that the

force of recoil is utilized to turn the cylinder and cock the hammer. It is a "break-open" gun and ejects its shells the same as other guns of that type do.

The author's use of the word "flat" leads me to believe that what he had in mind was an automatic pistol, for most automatics are more or less flat. But the automatic pistol is not a revolver because it has no revolving cylinder. Calling an automatic pistol a revolver is a mistake frequently made by newspaper writers who seem to think that all one-hand guns are revolvers.

I have read *Adventure* for many years and hope to read it for many more and this is the first mistake I have found so I couldn't resist telling you about it. —W. H. CRISWELL

A CAMP-FIRE comrade sends in an eye-witness account of the recent earthquake disaster in Nicaragua:

Managua, Nicaragua

A couple of years back I started reading *Adventure* whenever I found one, and the most interesting part of the magazine for me has been the Camp-Fire. In this department of your excellent book I get my ideas on where to go next and more or less of what I will find when I get there.

By the date line on this letter you will see that at present writing I am in Nicaragua, but by the time that this appears in print I expect to be in Honduras. However when I enter the Republic of Honduras it will be through the back door, as I have been notified by the American Minister here not to go. In fact he went so far as to say, I could not go.

Now to tell a T.T.T. (Tipical Tropical Tramp) not to do anything is a sure sign he is going to do it or break a leg trying. So the back trails for me, dodging from dobie shack to hacienda, eating rice and beans on a tortilla and across the line in the dead of night.

NOW all this is not what I started out to say. In fact what I had in mind was to tell you all about a recent experience I have just gone through—the Managua, Nicaragua, earthquake. You read the papers of course and got some good dope, but here is a little of the behind-the-scenes stuff.

The morning of March 31st, at the hour of 10:21 A.M., the city of Managua was shaken to the ground by eleven earth tremors that covered the time of one and one-half minutes from the first to the last shake. The populace was thrown immediately into an uproar. Men, women clutching babies to their breasts, and children ran screaming through the streets. The entire city went crazy. Walls of dwellings, roofs of tile, automobiles, bull carts, all crushed like eggshells littered in the streets. In almost every house ruin people were digging their way to safety from where they had been buried. The dead lay in gruesome positions and the injured were everywhere.

Into this hysterical mess came the United States Marines on the run, closely followed by the Guardia Nacional, and took charge. A Guardia native soldier side by side with a United States Marine were posted by their officers in the most stricken part of the town; there to keep order and stop the looting that had broken out with the last shake. Orders were to shoot any one who did not obey orders, and many were killed by these men of action.

In the Marine and Guardia camps on the edge of the city, every thing was fast being made into readiness to receive the injured and homeless. Every truck, automobile or other convenience was pressed into service hauling the injured to the hospitals. The dead were transported to the cemetery and dumped into a big ditch that a similar earthquake twenty-five years ago had opened.

Here in this graveyard the first trouble began. Twenty-seven men who had been pressed into service by the Guardia to bury the dead refused to work. As they were armed with pick and shovels and showed signs of using them, the officer in charge shot two of them dead. Twenty-five men immediately went to work and no more trouble developed from this source.

THE first heave of the earth broke the water mains. Water was a precious fluid, to be bought, and many homes which had wells that had not caved in were busy selling water to all and sundry. The soldiers put a quick end to this business by starting a water supply system of their own. Trucks from outlying towns were sent for; gasoline drums were grabbed and a pump of many thousand gallon capacity was set up along the lake front. Water was pumped into the drums and hauled to water stations established in all parts of the stricken city where long lines of people were eagerly waiting for the precious fluid to be rationed out.

The Marines opened their camp, storehouses and hospital to all who were in need. The Guardia did the same. Every one had something to eat, a blanket to sleep under, and medical attention if in need. Twelve hours after the disaster no one was uncomfortable and the city was being cleaned by hundreds of workmen.

The surrounding little Central American countries sent Red Cross aid at once and the country of San Salvador had its Red Cross workers with loads of supplies on the job ten hours after the quake. The North American Red Cross Director, Mr. Swift, arrived in Managua on the fourth day minus supplies but with money. Now money at this time was a useless commodity and could not be spent for anything, so all that Director Swift was able to do was to wait for ships to bring supplies. But the Marines and Guardia had the situation well in hand and needed no outside assistance.

ANOTHER outfit that did good work with little praise and with unjust criticism was the United States Army Engineers who, being stationed at Granada four miles away, hurried to the scene.

Fire, that monster that follows so closely on the heels of all disasters, was gutting the business district of the city and threatening to devour the entire town, when the engineers arrived and went to work. Their first action was to curb the fire. This was accomplished by dynamiting (because of the absence of water) all the houses surrounding the fire. Of course, some of the dynamited houses burned, but the main point is that the fire was checked. After the fire died out and things began to take on a normal aspect throughout the city, much criticism was directed toward the engineers. As one local paper put it: "Whoever heard of any one in their right mind dynamiting peoples' homes to stop a fire?"

—A. L. TRAIL

PICTURE of a buzzard making a meal:

Dolores, Colorado

I have been following with great interest the controversy on buzzards. Since reading these letters I have been on the watch for the few buzzards we have around here.

Yesterday was my first chance to do any prying into Mr. Buzzard's private affairs. While driving down the road past a field where the owner had been killing prairie dogs with poisoned grain, I noticed a dog crippling along, barely able to go. While thinking that there was one less pest, down came a large bird. My first thought was "hawk," but upon closer inspection saw that it was old Mr. Redheaded Turkey Buzzard in person. I immediately stopped and pulled out a pair of glasses and watched the proceedings.

AS the buzzard came down, the dog was still until the bird had almost landed and then he started to run away, causing our aerial friend to land three or four feet from the pup, which had stopped, possibly from too much poison. The buzzard then moved over in a series of hops and proceeded to work on the dog, which was still alive though helpless, so far as running or fighting was concerned.

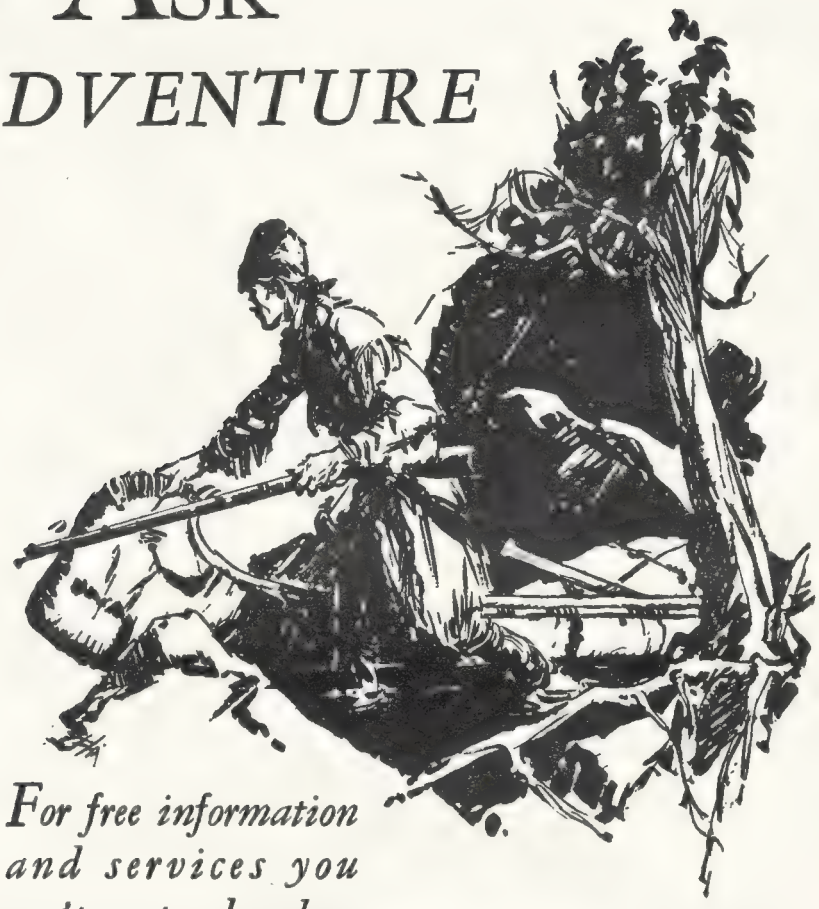
I watched for twenty or thirty minutes. In that time I saw enough to cause me to side in with those who say a buzzard will hop when on the ground, and also to decide that buzzards will also attack living animals at times, for I distinctly saw Mr. Dog put up a feeble resistance when the buzzard began tearing at his hide. —JAS. PHLEGAR

OUR Camp-fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The spirit of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There are no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

Ask Adventure



For free information and services you can't get elsewhere

Purpleheart

NAZARENE wood, used for billiard tables and cue butts, sinks in water.

Request:—"I would like what information you have on a wood called Nazarene. Where grown, why not more widely used?

While stationed at Coco Solo, Canal Zone, I first saw this wood—of deep purple color and attaining a high luster when polished with a cloth. We used to have patrol sticks made out of it."

—R. H. DUFF, U.S.S. *Pittsburgh*

Reply, by Mr. Wm. R. Barbour:—This is one of the species of the Genus Peltogyne (Family Leguminosae) variously called *pao rojo* in Brazil, *bois violet* in French Guiana, purpleheart in British Guiana, *algarobilla* in Venezuela, and *tananneo* in Colombia.

The tree is found scattered in the rain forests, sometimes 2000 feet or more to the acre. It reaches sizes of four feet or more diameter, and is tall and well formed. The heartwood is dull brown when fresh, but turns purple on exposure. It is very hard and heavy (sinks in water), takes a high polish, and is strong and durable.

Purpleheart is better known on European than on American markets, being used to some extent for cabinet work. In the States it is used mostly for billiard tables and cue butts and for inlay. In Brazil it is used for purposes (spokes, etc.) where we would use hickory.

It is hard to say why more has not been used. The same is true of many other tropical woods of the same class. Possibly it is because figure and

grain in a cabinet wood are more desired than color, which can be taken care of in the finishing. Purpleheart has a plain grain.

Mexico

FINGER-SIZE deities — almost the only religious antiques that may be brought out of the country.

Request:—"A friend and I are planning to make an expedition into Mexico, from Nogales, Arizona, to the border of Guatemala.

Our principal object is collecting all available information and data regarding Mexican Indian handcrafts, with the idea of creating sources of supply for the markets in U. S. for these articles, also religious antiques that we will be able to find.

We will travel by auto, new Ford car (six wheel truck will be the best for our purpose) and in the same time we expect to do some hunting, fishing and taking moving pictures of Mexico.

I have done considerable traveling in Mexico and South America in the past, on the train, horseback and on foot; by auto I have been as far as Mazatlan, so you can see that I have some idea of the conditions of the roads.

Are religious antiques open for exportation. I understand that everything over 150 years old is open and duty free."

—ALEX KALMANSON, Nogales, Arizona

Reply, by Mr. John Newman Page:—The principal purpose of your trip is a reasonable one and the manner in which you propose to carry it out is feasible, with certain reservations.

In the first place I must advise you strongly not to undertake a trip into southern Mexico, in an automobile, at this time of year. The rainy season down here begins in May and continues until well into October, and during that time it rains very nearly every day—heavily. In a country with poor roads or none at all, and unbridged rivers or creeks to be forded every few miles, you can imagine what that means. Do not start before October 1.

Do not try to follow the Pacific coast route. It is feasible as far as Mazatlan, perhaps a bit farther, but you would run into all kinds of difficulties in Nayarit, which is not only the most mountainous of the twenty-eight Mexican states but has the fewest and poorest roads. You would have to raft your truck across some rivers and have it towed across others by oxen, and many an upgrade passage would have to be negotiated by "ox-power".

Your gasoline supply will be a problem. As far as Oaxaca City you will not have much trouble, though there are no service stations along the road, but from there southward you must carry extra gas with you in drums. While in Mexico City it would be well for you to talk with the Aguila Company's officials about gas. They will give you information and otherwise cooperate.

Re equipment: Your first need will be a tent, and have it waterproofed. You can get one of the proper size made to your order, including paraffining, in Mexico City, for about twenty dollars. You order it one day and it's ready the next. Take sufficient tarpaulin to cover everything while on the road. Take two or three cans of Flit and a vaporizer with which to minimize the insect nuisance, and a couple of pounds of powdered *cebadilla* seeds, for lice, for Mexican Indians will insist on sitting on your belongings. You can obtain this powder from Beick Felix, Mexico City druggists. You and your companion will each want a folding army cot. Blankets, earthenware cooking utensils, etc., can be purchased cheaply anywhere in Mexico. Take along a good supply of quinine tablets for use in jungle country along the Guatemalan border, and use them before you get malaria instead of after, as so many do. The rest of your equipment is a matter of individual taste. A portable victrola is a great friend maker in primitive Indian territory.

Religious antiques are not exportable, and the older they are the harder it is to get them out of the country. Small finger-size stone images of the ancient fire, water, wind and reproductive deities may be bought by thousands in southern Mexico for five or ten centavos each, and it is likely you would be permitted to take a few of them from the country. Anything of larger size, of real historical or archeological interest, would almost certainly be confiscated by the Mexican Government.

Whip

THE Florida skinner, a well named piece of Southern cowboy gear.

Request:—"1. Where can I get a Florida stock whip and instructions cheap?

2. How much does a Florida cowboy get a month?"

—H. F. W. BREEN, Revere, Massachusetts

Reply, by Mr. Hapsburg Liebe:—1. The best whips of the kind used by Florida cowboys usually cost $1 per foot of lash, with no charge for the handle. The J. B. Hardin Hardware Co., Ybor City, Fla., was offering one about 15 feet long not a week ago for $4.50, all fitted with handle and cracker. Write this firm, if you think this whip would suit you. If not, write Knight & Wall, Tampa, Fla., and the Benj. T. Crump Co., Richmond, Va. If none of these firms has the whip you want, write Lykes Brothers, Tampa, Fla., enclosing stamped envelop, and ask them where you can find the whip you want. Lykes Brothers are big cattlemen.

These whips run up to 22 feet in length, and the longer ones are known as skinners—and, believe me, it is a fine name for them. They can be made to lay a steer's hide open, or snip off the head of a fair-sized snake. A cowboy up on the 7K Ranch, in Pasco County, this State, can take a cigaret from your mouth with his whip and never touch you, fifty times out of fifty.

The handles are of the best hickory, loaded with lead for balance, and average 18 inches in length. Handle and lash are fastened together in a loose sort of ball and socket joint. The handle is never counted in the length of the whip.

I have never seen a book of instructions for the handling of these stock whips. It is a knack. The wrist does it, more than the arm.

2. There is no set wage for cowboys here. They get anywhere up to $40 per month, with board. And they certainly must know the business of being a cowboy before they can land a job, because jobs are not so plentiful as cowboys.

State Police

AMONG other things, the mental examinations in New York test an applicant's ability to express himself in concise, well worded English.

Request:—"I would like to take an examination to be a New York State Policeman. Must one have military training? Or have knowledge of horses?"

—FRANCIS WERNER, Brooklyn, New York

Reply, by Mr. Francis H. Bent:—Yes, an applicant for the N. Y. State Police must show an honorable discharge from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, or National Guard. Also, he must be a practical horseman. After you pass the mental and physical exams, you will be ordered to report for enlistment. I can't help you out much on the mental exams. All I can tell you is that they are of a general nature to test a man's intelligence and ability to express himself in clear, concise and well worded English. If you have a high school education or its equivalent you should have no trouble.

A recruit receives general training in horsemanship, courtesy, the Code of Criminal Procedure, the New York Penal Code and general bearing toward the public in performance of duty.

Horsemanship

WESTERN versus Eastern (or English) style of riding.

Request:—"1. Why do most Eastern or English bridles have the double bit? It seems to me that the snaffle does all the work and that the curb could be eliminated?

2. I have a friend who learned to ride in the vicinity of San Antonio, and who refuses to post a trot—claiming that the best and most natural position is that of the body fully in the saddle. I would like to know if there is a recognized style of riding which is a happy medium between the English short stirrup and the Western full length stirrup, so that one may post a trot and take small jumps with grace and ease."

—JULES G. WATSKY, New York City

Reply, by Mr. Thomas H. Dameron:—1. The Westerner rides with a severe curb bit, but with such a light rein as not to injure the mouth. Most Easterners ride with a heavy hand, using a double bit (bit and bidoon), or Pelham bit. He rides on snaffle rein, and takes up on curb as necessary to control the horse. A curb can be eliminated on many horses, but the curb, if not abused, is preferable.

2. Length of stirrups has very little connection with the seat in the saddle. Nearly every rider has his favorite length. One must learn to ride without stirrups until he gets his "seat," then even the loss of a stirrup means little. The Westerner rides his stirrups standing just a little out of the saddle at a trot, touching the saddle promiscuously. The Easterner sits his horse tight at the slow trot and posts at the extended trot, that is, touches the saddle as each alternate front foot hits the ground. The average Easterner rides a stirrup just long enough so that he can raise his toe to catch the stirrup without raising the heel. The average Westerner rides a stirrup just long enough that he can raise his seat from the saddle by rising on his toes in the stirrups. Every riding master has his own recognized style.

Papua

THE "undiscovered" valley full of diamonds and poison gas remains undiscovered . . .

Request:—"About a year ago I read an article about an undiscovered valley in New Guinea, that contained a poisonous carbon gas, and was a bed of pure perfect diamonds. A party of scientists and prospectors were starting for the area at the time the article was published. Can you tell me of the outcome and their success? Is there a territory like that, or is it merely a fable? If diamonds are found, what would in your opinion be the future of an American investigating and prospecting there?"

—FRANK W. KARDAS, New York City

Reply, by Mr. L. P. B. Armit:—Your query regarding the "undiscovered" valley that is full of precious stones, which is said to be in Papua, is the third I have received this year. If the valley is really "undiscovered" how can anybody know about it? I have been here over thirty-five years and I have never heard of it! If there was such a valley, which I doubt, you can bet your shirt that the people here would have exploited it long since . . . However, as a resident of Papua (New Guinea—the island has two names) I wish I knew of such a valley. The alleged poisonous carbonic acid gas would not prevent me from having a look at it. A gas mask does not cost much. Diamonds have not so far been discovered in New Guinea.

If you have sufficient cash—you will require at least $5,000—you could try a trip into the unexplored interior of the Territory of New Guinea (the adjoining territory which was once known as Ger-

man New Guinea, but which the Australian forces captured in 1914) after gold. Some good finds were made up that way four years ago. There is still a vast area of country waiting the prospector—but prospecting in New Guinea is a terribly costly business. And it requires knowledge of tropical conditions.

West Virginia

CLIMATE and coal seams.

Request:—"1. What is the average thickness of the principal coal seams in West Virginia?

2. What is the average snowfall in the vicinity of Charleston, and are the winters mild?

3. Did West Virginia suffer much from the 1930 drought?"

—DAYTON PARSONS, Marceline, Missouri

Reply, by Mr. Lawrence Edmund Allen:—1. The average thickness of the principal coal seams is four feet.

2. Charleston usually has mild winters. When the mercury gets down to 10 above, that's what we call cold weather. Snowfall generally is very light, with not more than two or three heavy snows during the entire winter. Weather records available here do not show how many inches of snow fell last year, but I can tell you that there was just a few inches and a long way from a foot.

3. West Virginia was among the States hardest hit by the prolonged drought of 1930. Conservative estimates of the damage ranged near $5,000,000, while some agricultural experts placed it at nearly three times that figure.

VACANCY to be filled on the Ask Adventure staff: South Sea Islands. Readers who feel that they are qualified to serve as expert on this subject are invited to state their qualifications by letter to the Managing Editor, *Adventure*, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City.

Our Experts—They have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine

They will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assume any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible.

1. **Service**—It is free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelope and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.
2. **Where to Send**—Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. DO NOT send questions to this magazine.
3. **Extent of Service**—No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.
4. **Be Definite**—Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing *Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure*.

Small Boating *Skiff, outboard, small launch river and lake cruising.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, California.

Canoeing *Paddling, sailing, cruising; equipment and accessories, clubs, organizations, official meetings, regattas.*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 303 Laurel Ave., Libertyville, Illinois.

Motor Boating GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, New Jersey.

Motor Camping MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M. D., care American Tourist Camp Assn., 152 West 65th St., New York City.

Yachting A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Place, Chicago, Ill.

Motor Vehicles *Operation, legislative restrictions and traffic.*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care *Adventure*.

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All Shotguns *including foreign and American makes; wing shooting.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure*.

All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, *including foreign and American makes.*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Box 75, Salem, Ore.

Edged Weapons, *pole arms and armor.*—ROBERT E. GARDNER, 939 Timberman Road, Grandview, Columbus, Ohio.

First Aid on the Trail *Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake bite; first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds.*—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Box 322, Westfield, New Jersey.

Health-Building Outdoors *How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel, right exercise, food and habits.*—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D.

Hiking CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Box 322, Westfield, New Jersey.

Camping and Woodcraft PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tennessee.

Mining and Prospecting *Territory anywhere in North America. Questions on mines, mining, mining law, methods and practise; where and how to prospect; outfitting: development of prospect after discovery; general geology and mineralogy necessary for prospector or miner in any portion of territory named. Any question on any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic.* —VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Precious and Semi-precious Stones *Cutting and polishing of gem materials; principal sources of supply; technical information regarding physical characteristics, crystallography, color and chemical composition.*—F. J. ESTERLIN, 210 Post St., San Francisco, Cal.

Forestry in the United States *Big-Game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild animal life in the forests.*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry *Tropical forests and products; economic possibilities; distribution; exploration, etc. No questions on employment.*—WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care of Insular Forester, Rio Piedras, Porto Rico.

Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada *General office, especially immigration work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk, General Information.*—R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Army Matters, United States and Foreign CAPTAIN GLEN R. TOWNSEND, Ripon, Wisconsin.

Navy Matters *Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery; tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers except such as contained in the Register of Officers can not be answered. Maritime law.*—LIEUT. FRANCIS V. GREENE, U. S. N. R., 442 Forty-ninth St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

U. S. Marine Corps CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, 541 No. Harper Ave., Hollywood, Cal.

Aviation *Airplanes; airships; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. Parachutes and gliders. No questions on stock promotion.*—LIEUTENANT JEFFREY R. STARKS, 1408 "N" Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

State Police FRANCIS H. BENT, JR., care *Adventure.*

Royal Canadian Mounted Police PATRICK LEE, 3432 83rd Street, Jackson Heights, New York City.

Horses *Care, breeding, training of horses in general; hunting, jumping, and polo; horses of the old and new West.* —THOMAS H. DAMERON, 1006 E. 10th St., Pueblo, Colo.

Dogs JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal *Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Cal.

Taxidermy SETH BULLOCK, care *Adventure.*

Entomology *General information about insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects, etc.*—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

Herpetology *General information on reptiles and amphibians; their habits and distribution.*—KARL P. SCHMIDT, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Illinois.

Ichthyology *Fishes and lower aquatic vertebrates.*—GEORGE S. MYERS, Stanford University, Calif.

Orthnithology *General information on birds; their habits and distribution.*—DAVIS QUINN, 3545 Tryon Ave., Bronx, New York, N. Y.

Stamps H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Ave., Denver, Colo.

Coins and Medals HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., New York City.

Radio *Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

Photography *Information on outfitting and on work in out-of-the-way places. General information.*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, New Jersey.

Linguistics and Ethnology (*a*) *Racial and tribal tradition; folklore and mythology.* (*b*) *Languages and the problems of race migration.* (*c*) *Individual languages and language-families; interrelation of tongues.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Old Songs that Men Have Sung ROBERT W. GORDON. *Archive of American Folk-Song; Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.*

Football JOHN B. FOSTER, American Sports Pub. Co., 45 Rose Street, New York City.

Baseball FREDERICK LIEB, *The New York Evening Post*, 75 West St., New York City.

Track JACKSON SCHOLZ, 73 Farmington Ave., Longmeadow, Mass.

Tennis FRED HAWTHORNE, Sports Dept., New York *Herald Tribune*, New York City.

Basketball I. S. ROSE, 321 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.

Bicycling ARTHUR J. LEAMOND, 469 Valley St., South Orange, New Jersey.

Swimming LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 260 Washington St., N. Y. C.

Skating FRANK SCHREIBER, 2226 Clinton Ave., Berwyn, Ill.

Skiing and Snowshoeing W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Hockey "Daniel," *The World-Telegram*, 73 Dey St., New York City.

Archery EARL B. POWELL, 524 West 3rd St., Los Angeles, Cal.

Boxing CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH.

Fencing CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 455 West 23rd St., New York City.

The Sea Part 1 *American Waters.* Also ships, seamen, shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, small boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America.—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESEBERG, 118 Uhler St., Mt. Ida, Va.

The Sea Part 2 *Statistics and records of American shipping; names, tonnages, dimensions, service, crews, owners of all American documental steam, motor, sail, yacht and unrigged merchant vessels. Vessels lost, abandoned, sold to aliens and all Government owned vessels.*—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESEBERG, 118 Uhler St., Mt. Ida, Va.

The Sea Part 3 *British Waters.* Also old-time sailoring.—CAPTAIN DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 4 *Atlantic and Indian Oceans; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits; Islands and Coasts.* (See also West Indian Sections.)—CAPT. DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 5 *The Mediterranean; Islands and Coasts.* —CAPT. DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 6 *Arctic Ocean.* (*Siberian Waters*).—CAPT. C. L. OLIVER, care *Adventure.*

Hawaii DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Philippine Islands BUCK CONNOR, Universal City, California.

★**New Guinea** *Questions regarding the policy of the Government proceedings of Government officers not answered.*—L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

★**New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa** TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania** ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge Street, Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

Asia Part 1 *Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States; and Yunnan.*—GORDON MACCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York.

Asia Part 2 *Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies in general, India, Kashmir.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, care *Adventure.*

Asia Part 3 *Annam, Laos, Cambodia, Tongking, Cochin China.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Asia Part 4 *Southern and Eastern China.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

★**Asia Part 6** *Northern China and Mongolia.*—GEORGE W. TWOMEY, M. D., U. S. Veterans' Hospital, Fort Snelling, Minn. and DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Asia Part 7 *Japan.*—OSCAR E. RILEY, 4 Huntington Ave., Scarsdale, New York.

Asia Part 8 *Persia, Arabia.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLEY-GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.*

Asia Minor DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Africa Part 1 *Egypt.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT.

Africa Part 2 *Abyssinia, French Somaliland, Belgian Congo.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, care of *Adventure.*

Africa Part 3 (British) *Sudan, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, care of *Adventure.*

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Africa Part 6 *Morocco.*—GEORGE E. HOLT, care *Adventure.*

Africa Part 7 *Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Southern and Northern Nigeria.*—W. C. COLLINS, care *Adventure.*

Africa Part 8 *Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal and Rhodesia.*—CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, Adventure Camp, Box 107, Santa Susana, Cal.

✠**Africa Part 9** *Portuguese East.*—R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada.

Madagascar RALPH LINTON, 324 Sterling Hall, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

Europe Part 1 *Jugo-Slavia and Greece.*—CAPT. WM. W. JENNA, West Point, New York.

Europe Part 2 *Albania.*—ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving Street, Washington, D. C.

Europe Part 4 *Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Poland.*—G. I. COLBRON, East Avenue, New Canaan, Conn.

Europe Part 5 *Scandinavia.*—ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving Street, Washington, D. C.

Europe Part 6 *Great Britain.* THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Avenue, London, W. C. 2, England.

Europe Part 7 *Denmark.*—G. I. COLBRON, East Avenue, New Canaan, Conn.

Europe Part 8 *Holland.*—J. J. LEBLEU, 51 Benson Drive, Glen Ridge, New Jersey.

Europe Part 9 *Belgium.*—J. D. NEWSOM, care *Adventure.*

Europe Part 10 *Switzerland.*—DR. ALBERT LEEMAN, Kramgasse, 82, Bern, Switzerland.

Europe part 12 *Spain.*—J. D. NEWSOM, care *Adventure.*

South America Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile.*—EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure.*

South America Part 2 *Venezuela, the Guianas, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil.*—PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, 457 W. 123rd St., New York, N. Y.

✠**West Indies** *Cuba Isle of Pines, Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups.*—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, Box 1333, Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, Cuba.

Central America *Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala.*—E. BRUGUIERE, 143 Waverly Place, New York City.

Mexico Part 1 *Northern Border States of old Mexico, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Mexico Part 2 *Southern Lower California.*—C. R. MAHAFFEY, care of S. P. Company, Arlight, Cal.

Mexico Part 3 *Southeastern Federal Territory of Quintana Roo and states of Yucatan and Campeche.* Also archeology.—W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Poplar Ave., Takoma Park, Md.

Mexico Part 4 *Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan.*—JOHN NEWMAN PAGE, Fernandez Fiallo 42, Xochimilco, Oaxaca, Mexico.

Newfoundland.—C. T. JAMES, Box 1331, St. Johns, Newfoundland.

Greenland Also dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Canada Part 1 *New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.* Also homesteading in Canada Part 1, and fur farming.—FRED L. BOWDEN, 5 Howard Avenue, Binghamton, New York.

✠**Canada Part 2** *Southeastern Quebec.*—JAS. F. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada.

✠**Canada Part 3** *Height of Land Region, Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec, Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin.* Trips for sport and Adventure—big game, fishing, canoeing, Northland travel, also H. B. Company Posts, Indian tribes and present condtions.—S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), 45 Vernon St., Toronto, Can.

✠**Canada Part 4** *Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario.*—HARRY M. MOORE, Desoronto, Ont. Canada.

✠**Canada Part 5** *Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario.* Also national parks.—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 115 Huron St., Walkerville, Ont., Canada.

Canada Part 6 *Hunters Island and English River District.*—T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn.

✠**Canada Part 7** *Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta.*—C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C.

Canada Part 8 *The Northw. Ter. and the Arctic, especially Ellesmere Land, Baffinland, Melville and North Devon Islands, North Greenland and the half-explored islands west of Ellesmere.*—PATRICK LEE, 3432 83rd Street, Jackson Heights, New York City.

✠**Canada Part 9** *Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin and Hudson Bay mineral belt.*—LIONEL H. G. MOORE, Flin Flon, Manitoba, Canada.

Alaska Also mountain climbing.—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 5607 Virginia Ave., Hollywood, Calif.

Western U. S. Part 1 *California, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Utah and Arizona.*—E. E. HARRIMAN, 1832 Arlington Ave., Los Angeles, Cal.

Western U. S. Part 2 *New Mexico.* Also Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance.—H. P. ROBINSON, 411 N. Maple St., Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Western U. S. Part 3 *Colorado and Wyoming.* Homesteading. Sheep and Cattle Raising.—WILLIAM WELLS, Sisters, Oregon.

Western U. S. Part 4 *Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains.*—FRED W. EGELSTON, 357 Chestnut Street, Reno, Nevada.

Western U. S. Part 5 *Idaho and Surrounding Country.*—R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

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